Film Quarterly

Volume 47
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Spring 1994

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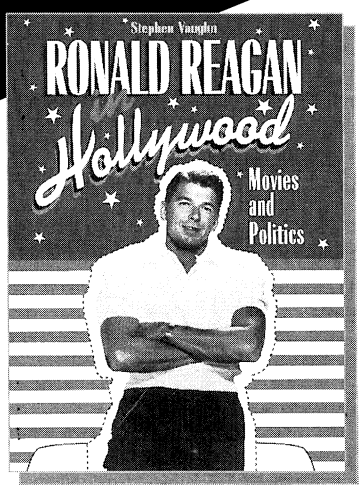

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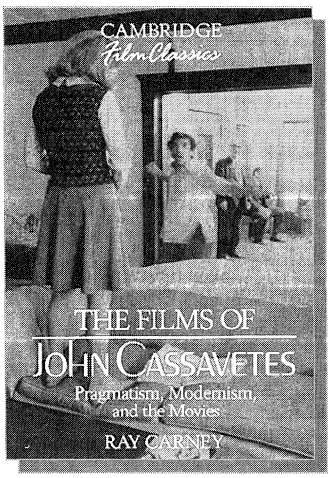

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A Guest in

An Interview with Federico Fellini

Gideon Bachmann

The conversation which follows did not take place all at once. Although I had known Federico Fellini since 1956, when he came to New York to publicize *Nights of Cabiria* and appeared on my radio show, and although I had written about him extensively, made a documentary about him (*Ciao, Federico!*), and photographed him continually for 37 years, we had not actually sat down to discuss his filmmaking ideas and his life philosophy until a few years before his death.

This was not because I did not ask him. It was, I now think, his reluctance to sound definitive about anything, and especially about himself, which made him postpone again and again a long-promised, lengthy, and in-depth conversation on these topics. Even the simple telling of the facts of his life kept being postponed. And although once, in 1962, after I had worked with him on $8^1/_2$ and was following him during the shooting of *Juliet of the Spirits*, he sat down with me on a rainy afternoon and allowed me to record his story on five hours of tape, he was beside himself when these tapes were lost and refused to do new ones. I think this is because the story would not have been the same if he had tried again. He would have invented another life, a risk he probably wished to avoid in case the first tapes ever showed up.

But after *City of Women*, on which my companion, Deborah Beer, was the set photographer (as she was on *And the Ship Sails On* and on *Ginger and Fred*), he became somewhat more open to the suggestion of talking about himself in what I told him would be a discussion in depth. He smiled at this definition but he did not refuse, although at the same time he practically stopped giving journalistic interviews. From today's vantage point, I can't help feeling that for Fellini, allowing this discussion was a small way of giving up a battle for continual renewal.

I hope to convey, with these excerpts from many hours of tape, an image of a man who has shaped our vision of the century.

My Own Dreams

Fellini directing Marcello Mastroianni in *City of Women* (upper left); *City of Women* (center)

GIDEON BACHMANN: *You always say you are a storyteller. What kind of story fascinates you, and why?*

FEDERICO FELLINI: The stories are born in me, in my memories, in my dreams, in my imagination. They come to me very spontaneously. I never sit down and decide to invent a story; it's not a programmed activity. Often it's a suggestion that comes from something read or from a personal experience. These things encounter a pretext; they meet in my mind with some triggering thing, like a face that suddenly looms up in front of me in the subway or a smell that reaches my nostrils, a sound that suddenly occurs, which somehow evokes my fantasy, and I create characters and situations that seem to organize themselves, to take shape in my mind without my active intervention. It then becomes my job to follow them, to stay with them for a bit, to make friends with them, and that's how they turn into stories.

What is it about those people you see, on the subway, for example, that starts the ball rolling?

Usually something that strikes me, moves me, surprises me, makes me smile. The expressions of the human creature in all its aspects, all its contradictions, all its elements. It can even be just something a man is wearing that tells you a story about him or makes you want to invent one. But there isn't necessarily a direct connection between the person I see and the story this brings up in me. It may just contribute to an atmosphere.

A spark, a ray of sunshine reflected in a faraway window, attracts your attention, and as you come closer you realize that the window is part of a building in á street and in a city, and you follow this light like a thread that takes you through that city and through the lives of the people you encounter there, slowly and always deeper and deeper.

Juliet of the Spirits (left); *Satyricon* (opposite page)

All I know about myself is that I seem to have an incurable tendency to go on imagining beyond that which I see concretely before me. I feel that my films are already there, ready to be met, one after the other, in the most natural way. It's like a train that runs along its predetermined track and awaiting it are the stations. Looking back now on my films, they seem like stations which were waiting for me, and what I had to do—and this is my work—was not to deviate from that track. To follow this itinerary, to arrive punctually to meet them as planned, to make them as planned.

I am sorry this all sounds so profound. In conversations of this kind one always finds oneself trying to be more philosophical and romantic than necessary, because in reality things are very much simpler.

How do you recognize the spark, that reflection in the window? Are you attracted by something physical?

I think the signal for recognizing that something has occurred, that a first contact has happened, or at least that you are close to that faraway city—invisible thus far—which will be the film, is a certain feeling of happiness. A happiness that seems to permeate your whole organism, an unexpected note of joy.

This note of joy is the greeting that this new thing addresses to me, and it usually includes some sense of what the new film will be about.

Does it then become a matter of form and style? How do you put the fantasies into images, the faraway city onto the screen? What is the first thing you do?

You need to maintain a constant equilibrium—which is constantly endangered, of course—between that which you had wanted to do, in other words, the film as it presented itself in your imaginative sphere, and the one you are actually making. That's why I hate going to look at rushes, for example, as most of my colleagues do and as I did when I started making films. Of course this is not folklore; it's not the usual: Oh, Fellini, he-never-looks-at-rushes thing; it's because I've realized that watching rushes, you begin to see the film you are making, and not the one you had wanted to make. And you end up, slowly, correcting your intentions through that which you are actually producing. I, on the other hand, need to continue to pretend to myself that I am continuing to make the film I originally had in my head. This way I continue to make my ideal film, reserving my delusion to the end, when there is nothing more I can do.

If you don't want to become aware of the film you are making in order not to destroy your mind's view of it, how do you then maintain your vision when confronted with the compromises which the film-making process inevitably entails?

I think that the psychological type whom we tend to define as a creator, or an artist, always maintains an essential, vital component in his character—of adolescence, of childishness, of innocence—and thus he needs an extremely authoritarian manager, customer, or boss to pull him along, to actually make him turn his dreams into something concrete, essentially into a product, a transmittable object, a language. In Italy, in addition, we have the tradition of needing some other authority, sometimes spiritual like the Pope, sometimes earthly like an archduke, an emperor, a king, to give us the order to paint a ceiling for them, to create a fresco, to write a madrigal.

So what you call the inevitable compromises of the film-making process are actually useful to me, because they slightly curb my total liberty, even though I always complain that they want to take it from me. I think total liberty would be dangerous for those who claim that they want to tell things to others, that they want to recount the world, recreate it in a story, and of course especially to those who pretend to be giving an

interpretation of reality. Fantasy offers you its images in a much more suggestive way, much more seductively, much shinier than the way you will eventually succeed in materializing them. Therefore it is a very strong temptation to leave things vague, flowing, unsharp, on the screen. To materialize all these undefined and loose notions into images is a heavy load of a job, so we need someone to oblige us to go through with it.

What you really need, I think, in the end, is a customer, one who wants the things you make, in order to bring off the creative act, to trigger this mediumlike interplay between your inclination—or let's use this obscene word again: your inspiration—and the practical act of its materialization. And by mediumlike, I mean something that is felt rather than known, something the existence of which we suspect but cannot prove except through this very materialization, which may, in some cases, actually diminish it. In that case, we can't even prove the existence of that thing which our intuition had conjured up, and it may forever remain a dream, something I might try to materialize in the next film, or never.

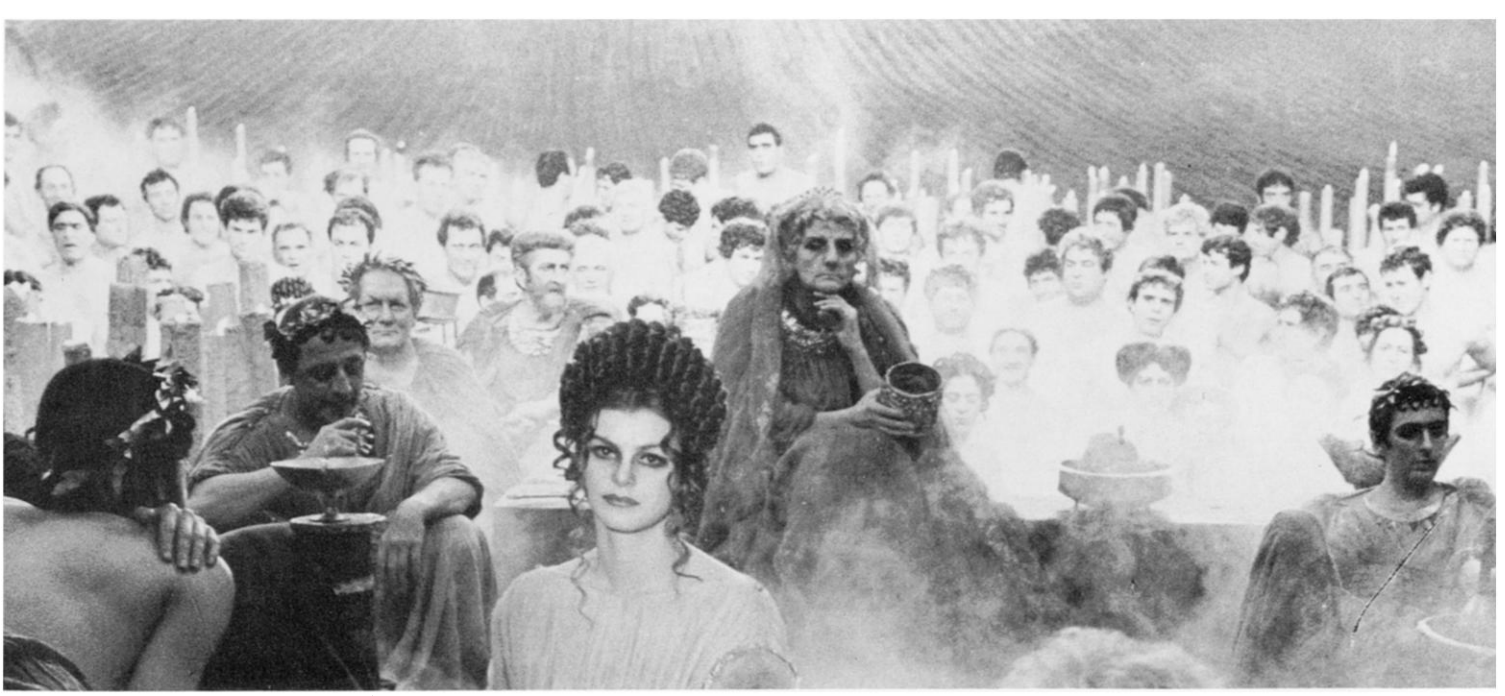
What are your films to you when they are finished? Sons? Daughters? Fathers? Mothers? Lovers?

None of these; in fact, I don't feel a real sense of being related to them. They rather appear to me as strangers, as unknown presences which for a series of mysterious reasons I find myself close to for a while, who pretend to have chosen me to give them form and character and to make it possible for them to recognize themselves, too. It's like traveling together for a time under some common, soft roof, hanging from a loosely filled balloon, in a bubble which I am called upon to design, to fill, to limit, and to give character to.

Once I have done this, as far as I am concerned, our roads diverge completely. He—the film—goes along his road, with the features which I had thought he wanted me to give him, with the identity which it had seemed to me he had wanted me to define, and I go along my own road, looking for, or waiting for, another phantom presence, which inevitably I find edging toward me, invisibly tickling and pushing me to give to it, too, a face, a personality, a story.

Does that mean that you really don't care about your films' later life, but only about creating them?

Making films, stopping at the stations along the track, seems to me like a series of relationships with unknown persons who live at these stations, who, once they have been realized, identified, materialized, "caught" as it were in their essence, move away again into the distance, without even saying good-bye. Or maybe it's me who moves on towards the next stop, having, sort of, settled my accounts at the preceding one. Maybe that's why I don't usually see my films again. It seems to me that meeting again is not part of



the process we have lived together; that the film's job was to appear and mine to concretize it, that's all.

All these things which you say stimulate creativity in you are in essence things that are already part of you, and only the trigger is something that comes from the outside. Are you not ever stimulated to express something of the time in which you live? The male protagonists of your films often seem vaguely lost—is that because you, too, feel that way in modern society?

I think that the reason questions like that are often asked of me and that a topical interpretation is often given of my films lies in the fact that in the past, on occasion, a bit superficially, the central character in my films has been identified, to some extent, with its author—me. Like in *8½*, for example. That seems to me somewhat bold but also limiting, because I feel that the author can be recognized in all the characters of his film, and not only in them but also in the sets, the objects, the music. One can feel a greater sympathy or a greater solidarity with one or another of the characters one is in the process of materializing, and one may pick them in order to say—or make them say—certain things which within one's own illusion of the moment seem to be more of oneself than of others, but normally such a direct relation never happens.

Because you can't just put into the mouth of one of your characters your own way of thinking or your own philosophy, and then hope that this will be the thing which will be the most expressive in that character, or that this might actually sound honest on the screen. I find, on the contrary, that the things which best express the author are the least conscious ones, the ones that have been the least subject to a process of realization and conceptualization. I think, in fact, that an author reveals himself most clearly exactly where he has had no consciousness at all of the thing that he was doing.

Nevertheless, many of your films are set in a precise historical time and context. That can't all be subconscious. And even if you don't program it, you are saying things you feel about this time and this context.

Now that you make me reflect and seek the programmatic elements in what I am doing, maybe yes, because I hope to relate a more-or-less sincere, a more-or-less exhibited, a more-or-less hypocritical discomfort of my generation. Quite possibly I am giving, more-or-less consciously, to characters in my films—usually it is Marcello—something to say which gratifies me in this sense and expresses the discomfort and the melancholy—more-or-less conscious and more-or-less sincere—of a character finding himself on the edge of an age at which he has difficulty in remaining in step with the reality that surrounds him. And this is often interpreted as being *my* discomfort and *my* melancholy. But this linear way of looking at the character, if I did this on purpose, would be a simple trick, coldly calculated. I don't think that what I do amounts to an identification with myself which I can no longer control.

Is it possible that the discomfort which is there in you has to do with the film-making process itself?

Marcello Mastroianni in *8½*

I do feel discomfort when I am about to start a film, but not so much for this reason. I often arrive at the point of making a film in a state of mind which is almost antipathetic to it. I resent the film at this point; I begin to consider it a frivolous undertaking.... I am invaded by a feeling of irritation that accompanies all things that one is forced to do. But I am used to these feelings and I know that in reality they are the sign of the film being ready in me. This antipathy, this hate, indicates to me that I must begin. I arrive at a point of such unease that I *must* make it in order to free myself of this feeling. I escape, I make the film as if I were escaping from something, as if I were in flight, to get rid of it, to get it off my back. Like getting rid of an illness.

I don't want to exaggerate the pathological aspects of the creative act, but deep down, that's what it is. This unknown one, the one I was talking about before, who is neither son nor father but a presence suddenly all too close to me, urging me to give him life, is a kind of infection.

Recently these unknown presences have become more and more disturbing because they force me into a relationship which is ever more disquieting and upsetting. I don't know how it all started, this feeling of unease and bother and repulsion. To some extent it may have to do with the simple, external fact that in the last decades my films, before getting a chance to start production, have given me all the time in the world to allow me to lose my enthusiasm. This endless waiting in a parking zone while the details are being worked out is enough to dissolve my initial excitement. While the producers are making their deals, trying to establish an economic/financial platform for the film on the basis of their greed and their gluttony, I hang there like a diver on a high board, constantly poised for the jump, hands pointed in front of me, held back because they still have to build the pool, put water in it, and collect the spectators.... In the end you are no longer doing a high jump but are throwing yourself off the board in order to get it over with.

When you are working, I never have the feeling you are as depressed as you get in between films.

Something else intervenes. As soon as I get to the studio, despite all this neuroticism, I begin to feel again the fascination of the stage with all its attractions. I see the crew all ready, the sets all built, and then, when the lights are switched on, I submit to the romance of it all. I am back being a puppeteer, a marionettist, a story-teller, and it all suddenly becomes pleasant again. I recognize that this is my life, I recognize myself in it. And all that unease passes.

An unease which you have explained on what you call the simple, external level, but not on a deeper level, where I suspect much of it originates: that the public in the cinemas is ever less sensitive to art, that the quality of life is diminishing, and that much of this is caused by television, which you continue to ridicule but have also used as a medium.

One cannot take seriously the fact that the public no longer loves the cinema and wants a spectacle of a kaleidoscopic, sensational, and senseless nature. If I accepted this, I'd have to resign myself and change my profession. I can't permit myself to think in that way.

I must be aware of what is happening around me. It is useless to hark back to generational nostalgia, to make *Amarcord*s full of laments, or to make moralistic works, because, obviously, the generation after one's own always abhors and disperses our values and goes pell-mell after its own.

Are you saying that you will try and adjust your work methods, your creative style, to the new demands, to television's voracity?

What I am trying to say is that it is almost impossible to allow for the wishes of a public born of the television style, influenced by a constant bombardment of images in which man believes he recognizes himself. For 24 hours a day we are exposed to something we think is a mirror, and narcissistically we stay there, watching what "we" are doing the world over. We think that we see things that we ourselves are doing, the stories we think we are really living, while in reality we see all that in a form which robs things of their reality.

It's a form caught halfway between shots of actuality and things written and performed, so that the TV viewer is constantly meandering between fantasy and publicity. This exposure has created a highly impatient kind of spectator, neurotic and hypnotized, of whom we, who create cinema, cannot claim to understand the needs. He just wants to see images that move with a sound track spewing forth clangors of various kinds which he can think are music.

When I say that a maker of cinema cannot afford to take into account the needs of a spectator who has undergone such a mutation, who has become alienated, diverse, impatient, and ill-informed, I cannot, either, disregard him. Television is a form that stands between us and reality instead of creating a bridge, a form against which of necessity we must measure ourselves, which we must count with, and with which we must confront ourselves. I sometimes say that I derive great stimulus from this problem, and I am in fact not one of

those who say that the cinema is dead and that TV has killed it. We say things like "the remote-control unit has destroyed the viewer's ability to follow a story line," and "there is no more space on TV for developing character," and so on. But of course these things are true.

Sometimes I am even able to see something positive in what TV has done. I think it has helped destroy a series of structures, schemes, panoramas, and ways of thinking which have kept human beings in a kind of prison composed of traditional ways of seeing, of perceiving existence. Television is a laser ray that is destroying all that, and it has not yet found something to replace these old values with. But I think out of all this destruction may grow a new relationship to reality. And thus a new way of being a man. I find it exciting to be part of this development, and or at least a witness to it, and to try and find, myself, a way of telling things that are within our tradition but are in the style and form given to them by new forms of perceiving existence.

But television creates uniformity, something that you in your work have constantly fought.

Television is a big container. The fact that it expresses itself in a language which tends to replace content doesn't necessarily mean that in its language it cannot also express something that goes beyond itself, or that the language really remains only a vehicle for a content, whatever that content may be and whatever that language may be. It's a matter of how to do it.

What I think needs to be done—and what I have in a very modest way tried, within the limits of my ability—is to undertake a small, delicate reflection or rethinking of the television bombardment, to try and understand what this total inundation of millions and millions of homes all over the world means, and then to try, using the same means television employs, using its own language, using the infinite variety of its imagery and maybe its fleetingness, to convey to those who are the habitual inhabitants of that landscape, the habitual addressees of this inundation, that they, too, can make a small reflection, can undertake a rethinking of what it all means to them. To try and make them put themselves, for a moment, on the sidelines, away from the frontal exposure, so that they may see, from this position, what is actually happening. To try and give back to them some minute ability to judge. The real problem is to do this using the same material and language the viewer is used to and from which he normally does not expect to be stimulated into thought. I am not sure that I'll ever manage to do it, but I think it is worth trying.

In a sense the taking-over of the mind of the viewer by a visual medium is not new. You used to speak a lot about the influence that American cinema of the 1930s had upon you and your whole generation. This was a similar phenomenon, but today we tend to look back on it with nostalgia. What was the difference, for you?

My whole childhood was influenced by American cinema. For me and my friends, in those last days of Fascism in Italy, American movies represented an honesty and a freedom which we could never have dreamt of in our own lives. We were used to the lies of the Catholic Church and of the Fascist dictatorship, and our relationship with reality was completely falsified by these systems of thought. American films seemed to offer an alternative; they offered us a different form of life.

My whole generation was forever influenced by this picture of a country—and it was, of course, an idealized picture of America—which was so very different from our gray, sad, and only vaguely understood everyday existence. After all, what did we have? School, the family, Mass on Sundays, the military parades of Fascist Saturday, and this whole rubbish about being Romans, heirs of the great Caesars, and that our sense of honor demanded that we should march in goosestep. It was an entire childhood under the weight of these martial myths, under the load of a concept of history as a series of struggles, and thus under the conviction that war was something that made life possible. It became the dream of every boy in high school to die in the war.

On the personal level, we had the priest on Sunday, who promised that we would find ourselves in hell the very same evening if we dared to masturbate in the afternoon. And the family: Don't do this, don't do that, do it for mamma, do it for daddy, do it for uncle, do it for grandma—only for ourselves we were never allowed to do anything. Everything always had to be done for others.

And what kind of real thing existed, outside of school and Church, outside of chemistry and physics, the Greek myths and Fascism? The things of real life were all unclear, barely recognizable. and we had no instruments, no structures of the mind, to recognize them naturally and spontaneously. There were the seasons, the summer, the snow, the sea, and women, which the Church of course depicted not only as forbidden and unattainable, but which were not even meant to be attained. No wonder that we attributed to them the most unbelievable capacities and the most incredible lusts.

Amarcord

It was this dream world which we all wanted to find, to realize. Today I still need this feeling of being a guest in my invented dream world, a welcome guest in this dimension which I myself am able to program. What I need to maintain, however, is a feeling of curious surprise, a feeling of being a visitor, after all, an outsider, even when I am, at the same time, the mayor, the chief of police, and the alien registration office of this whole invented world, of this city that I have been led to by the shiny reflection in the faraway window and which I know so well in all its details that I can finally believe that I am in my own dream!

After all, it's the dreamer who has made the dream. Nothing is so intrinsically true and corresponds so deeply to the psychic reality of the dreamer as the dream itself. Nothing is more honest than a dream.

You are saying, then, that there is nothing more honest than a film*?*

It is true that I tend to use these two words, sometimes, as synonyms, but here I meant something else. We are talking about what is honest in artistic creation, and interpretation has never been the method I favored. In fact, I think there is a contradiction there. It is *because* the dreamer is so honest that he defends himself, that he refuses the simplified methods of interpretation. He provides, rather, a labyrinthine map, with a misleading set of instructions-for-use, with

La Strada (with, from left, Giulietta Masina, Anthony Quinn, and Aldo Silvani

purposely concocted, false road-indicators, and he speaks the language of symbols, which is much truer than the language of concepts, of facts.

Do you feel actively persecuted by attempts at interpretation?

In dreams there is nothing without significance. Every image therefore also has a significance in film. There is no such thing as coincidence, there is nothing unwanted, extraneous in a dream. Nothing is without significance. Each color, each picture means something, nothing has been put there in order to resemble reality, or in order to copy something preexistent. This is the thing that gives film its heraldic, aristocratic identity, which puts it on a level with all other forms of art.

You mean despite its technical dependencies?

We have always looked upon cinema as a sort of bastard. With despair or haughtiness—as the case may be—we have called it a thing halfway between a technical novelty and a vaudeville number. No! I want to say it very clearly—inasmuch as clarity is possible—that film is a total, all-engulfing form of art.

Everything I do in film is *made*, produced, invented by me. That's why my sea is made of plastic and my sounds are dubbed, postsynched. Postsynching gives the film an added dimension, an even greater range and intensity. It's not only that I can have words pronounced more clearly, but I can actually change them even after the scene is shot: I can put a more accurate phrase into the mouth of a certain face; I can give a character a more fitting voice, a voice that will help him be more accurately that which I want him to be. Postsynching is an additional enrichment beyond the many other possible filmic forms of expression. My dream becomes more accurate.

Is it then a major component of art that it should be "artificial"? Does it, in effect, become more real because it is less so?

Although I use it quite often myself, but always with some form of hesitation, the word "real" gives me great discomfort. I have to admit that I don't actually know what that word means. And, frankly, I have never felt that it means a great deal to me. But in a more direct answer to your question, let's take an example. When I sit with my friends in front of my house in Fregene, let's say after a pleasant lunch in the shade, everybody is talking to his neighbor, the birds are twittering, the plates rattle as they are being stacked—it's all one big confusion. I can make this scene much better, can shoot it better, observe the details better, and transmit its essence better, when I control and recreate every single element. In my film, the afternoon in my garden is much more accurate, much more expressive, much more musical than the real afternoon I have lived.

Amarcord

The element of film-making which to me has always been least exposed to our temptation to compare what's in the film to what we see outside in life, is music. I remember seeing, with you and Nino Rota, the first-ever projection of $8^1/_2$*, before Nino wrote the music which today is so emotionally linked to the film, and I have always regretted that this was an experience that can never be repeated. I remember feeling at the time that this was the "real" film.*

As far as music is concerned, when it doesn't have anything to do with a film of mine, I actually prefer not to hear it. Music seems to me to be so mysterious an art form, so fully engaging, so suggestive, so hypnotizing, that you must submit to it completely, you have to fully dedicate your soul to the feelings it provokes. And music always gives me a feeling of melancholy, of sadness and of darkness . . . of depression almost. This may be caused by the fact that music expresses itself with such accuracy, with such precision, that it transmits to me a feeling of exclusion, and also because it orchestrates time in accordance with its own intrinsic and often rigid rules. Music has such internal harmony that somehow you feel pushed aside, relegated to the edge of things.

It always evokes more perfect dimensions than the ones within which you live yourself. These are spiritual dimensions, and they are somewhat like admonitions, somehow you very quickly feel guilty. It's a pity that I have these reticent views about music, and maybe they are only a fruit of my Catholic upbringing. Anyway, I don't want to hear music; I don't want to have this feeling of being pursued by some angel-like figure raising an admonishing finger, who wants to tell me that everything I do, I do wrongly.

And when it is music for one of your films you don't feel admonished and criticized?

When I work everything changes, as I told you. It's a physical thing, too. Sometimes I get to the studio in the morning with a terrible headache and a fever, but when I have the lights turned on, when I sit down on the camera dolly and have myself pushed by the assistants along the track like a Chinese emperor or like an Egyptian pharaoh—in other words, when I am on my throne—these symptoms disappear. Suddenly I am healthy. This can only mean that when man is really in the center of his being, he finds eternal health there.

And so in this moment of beginning to work I also lose my fears, my melancholy, and the neurotic state which music usually causes in me. My work is like a kind of protective wall, like a diver's suit, that keeps me safe from the onslaughts of the neurotic psyche. Then I can tell the film's composer what I want, I can listen to his various attempts, and can follow the genesis of that which will become the music of the film. And so the music, too, becomes something I can fully control, something that will help my film to reach additional dimensions, but which at the same time is created totally out of myself.

If the important thing is to make sure that everything is created out of you and under your control, what space can the viewer possibly occupy? Does the imagined presence of a viewer who will take your film from you and make it his own enter into your dream while you are dreaming it, while you are making the film?

The screening, the release of the film, the event, the happening, actually have lost their value. I think we have reached the point where what counts is not the event but the information about the event. The interpretation of the event. The event itself could also *not* take place. In fact, it has already ceased to exist on the level of the private and personal emotions of each one of us. We are sitting there, in front of the TV screen, waiting for the reporter or the journalist to supply us with what in fact is not even information in the true sense, because it replaces the reality of which it speaks. We no longer believe the things we see ourselves. We are losing the habit of seeing things with our own eyes, with our own hearts, with our own emotional associations. We are waiting to see them represented in the terms and rhythms and styles of a spectacle, of an entertainment, in other words, in a form that robs them of their reality and us of the need to be responsible for our own reactions.

We see events—films, football games, news, disasters, joys, and commercials—all in the same key; always in the same angle of the room; always as part of that piece of furniture which we think we can completely control. We think the TV set is just a servile utensil, like the Frigidaire supplying us with food items which we think retain their original taste and freshness. We believe that the news items are served cleanly and without additional emotion, and as we get more used to this belief we cease to have a relationship of any kind with reality. So when you speak of a viewer who will take my film from me and make it his own you are already talking about a disappearing species.

Yet you continue to make your dreams into recognizable elements of communication. For whom? Or do you apply a specific methodology in order to reach what is left of the species of cognizant spectator?

At one point, in my film *And the Ship Sails On*, I used a mediator to erect the barrier between reality and

the viewer—between the story and the spectator—on purpose. I created the part of a journalist who tells the story to the spectators, so that when the characters appear vague, fluctuating, bodiless, it is because he paints them this way. He puts the real, the emotional, the passionate, the vital, contradictory, and sentimental reality under a veil, a diaphanous membrane, while he tells of the trip and of the people participating in it. These people thus assume the vagueness of shadows, the weightlessness of ghosts, and only when the story manages to rupture the protective surface created by the information and the presence of the journalist does it suddenly engulf the spectator in the feelings and contradictions and fears from which he had up to this point been shielded by the journalist's exorcisms. But of course when the membrane bursts, it is too late.

Irrationally, the facts engulf everything and everyone, and we find ourselves in the middle of the inevitable, unstoppable disaster. Curiously, every time the film is shown, it is at this point that the audience bursts into applause. This happens precisely at the point when it is no longer possibile to keep the facts of the story from being confronted directly and brutally, when they can no longer be hidden under an interpretation or an ideology or a viewpoint.

So you think that if properly approached, almost cheated into it, the spectator recovers his critical faculty?

No, this is not the applause of consent. I don't even think it has a direct connection to the story that is being told or the facts that appear on the screen or the nice way in which I have managed to put them there. I think this is a liberating kind of applause for the audience. They start as soon as it becomes clear that the disaster is unavoidable, so in essence they are applauding an apocalypse. They are applauding the end of the world. The question is: Why do they applaud a disaster? What has happened in us that we clap our hands at the sight of an irreversible tragedy?

Do you yourself have any answers to this question?

The more superficial, psychological explanation could be that when the public sees the catastrophe reproduced, shown on a screen, they feel outside of the fact, they feel that they have been saved, have been spared the catastrophe in their own lives. *Mors tua, vita mea*, a banal old Latin saying full of wisdom. The mere fact that I can look in upon the catastrophe means I am myself still alive. Thus cinema, because it creates witnesses, also discharges responsibility.

But I think the applause means something more: it probably indicates a form of gratitude for someone who has brought about this exorcism, who has managed to make this long-feared event happen far away and on a screen only. In reality it is applause for having been allowed to live something feared without having really become involved. And thus to survive.

I think, in fact, that this is a phenomenon which we will see happening more and more. And that the more people are in the hall, in the cinema, together, the more this phenomenon will operate: that a collective subconscious applauds the liberation from a fear long felt, and that this will happen in ever more vast and uncontrollable proportions.

Then there is another thing, and maybe this is more particularly Italian and ties in with what I said before about the formative associations we all have with our childhood: in the film, when it becomes clear that the catastrophe is approaching, the people gather and face it singing. This is our tendency to see ourselves represented as accepting death with glory. It's an operatic tradition maybe, a sort of self-pleasing view of our own ability to be moved by high emotions, almost a Niebelungen-ish sense of inner glory, when confronted with solemn death, and our need to throw ourselves into this stance, this composure, this bursting into song.

To make death part of the opera of one's own life, and thus to kick it in the teeth?

To change death, yes, into its own representation, and ourselves into respectable representatives of a courageous race. It's a very suggestive picture. But it is something that could also be said for any work of art, any painting, musical partition, book, or poem: namely that they become autonomous like persons once they have been represented by the artist and thus introduced into our sensorial sphere and dug out, as it were, from the subconscious and most intimate personal soul of the creator. For me, the film becomes a person, and that is the magic, because this operation of pulling it out of myself and giving it an identity within which it is self-reliant is a magical operation. This is the ritual of creation. The inner voices, shadows, and phantoms are put within the sensorial reach of others, are made reachable (in order not to say "understandable"), and become, in my work, visible.

Doesn't all art create a distance, and isn't it this distance which removes the possible future tragedy of the world from our consciousness, just like the example you gave from And the Ship Sails On*?*

I think this danger is even greater in film than in other arts because film has a certain verisimilitude, because of its photographic base, and this veristic

element makes it appear even more alive, more vital, more similar to an agglomerate, a complex of components that are close to those which make up a human being; in other words, to a microcosm of memories, of feelings, of experiences, of sensations, and of fears.

But human beings differ, sometimes even from moment to moment, whereas a film is always the same.

No, it isn't. Just as a person, even a friend, can seem different to you in differing situations, in different cities, in different seasons of the year, your own film can seem different to you in another city, at another hour of the day, under another meridian, with other people present. It manages to absorb and reflect the emanations of changing psychological, environmental, meteorological, and neurotic configurations just like a living person would do.

Maybe then reality is something we hate so much that we try to change it with every possible excuse?

Reality? There are only images of it, after all. Man probably uses images in order to fix reality in an acceptable shape, to make it less dangerous and more familiar. It's a psychic process against which we can do nothing. Even creating an image of God can't help us.

We are enclosed, shuttered within this mystery which we call the psyche, beyond which we are not permitted to make any suppositions, any affirmations about our existence. Everything is what we call psychic, even the idea of transcendence is just another invention. Reality is really only an idea we have. Actually we know nothing about anything.

And have you made your peace with this?

Let's say it doesn't terrorize me. I might even say that it comforts me. The fact of knowing nothing has provided me, over the years, with an extraordinary inner joy and excitement. Moreover, it gives me a sense of survival, because it underlines the fact that we are observers of our own fate, and observers by necessity survive because they are on the outside of the encroaching disasters. In *And the Ship Sails On* it is the journalist, the one who by definition is outside the events, who saves himself at the moment of catastrophe.

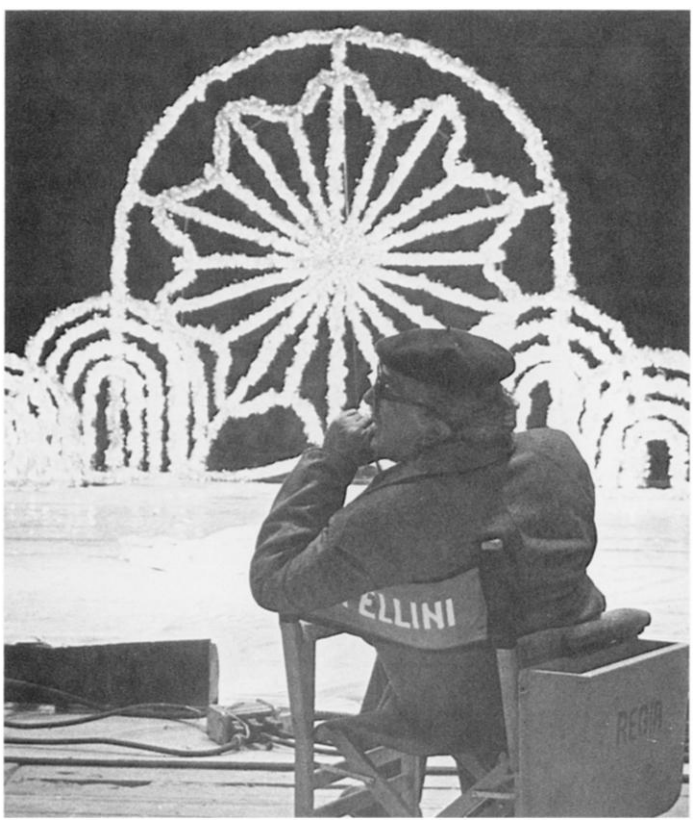
And the Ship Sails On

I remember that when you were shooting $8^1/_2$*, you had a little note on the camera next to the viewer, saying, "Remember, this is a comic film." Was that another attempt to stay outside the event, because after all, in that film you are talking about yourself?*

Yes. In that case I had put it there to distance myself from too smug a form of autobiographism, too self-satisfied a form of creating a self-portrait. I think you can only talk about yourself with that kind of detachment, especially when you talk about your phantoms and neuroses, because you must constantly remind yourself that the battle with phantoms and neuroses is a comic battle.

At the time you didn't admit so readily as you do now that 8½ was a film about you, so I assume that you are seeing even this film, now, under what you call a different meridian. Do you ever see one of your own films at another juncture of your life and discover things in it you didn't know you had put there?

I very rarely see my films again. In any case, I don't think I could discover things in them I had not meant to put there, but I could imagine being surprised that what I find in a film is not only what I had imagined but also that which it *is*. I discover the autonomy of the being I have created. I think this happens to sculptors when they have finished a statue and are finally dusting it off, removing all the marble dust or all the clay slag, and they find themselves confronted by the being they have brought to life.



It happens because making a film is more of an all-engulfing activity than, let's say, writing, and so the relationship of a film author is more complex and more involved with his work than that of other artists—I think. After all, you are constantly surrounded by living persons even if you are inventing their form and content through the filmic means at your disposal. When the camera stops, these people go back to smoking a cigarette, to talking together in their local dialect; there is this human magma around you, this warmth of life, which makes the voyage, to which I always compare the making of a film, a much more engaging enterprise.

You can't always see it while you are making it. For these reasons, and in that sense, I think, I may discover something in it when it is finished that I put there but not through fully conscious control. It's like a miner who works all day in the dark and doesn't know what he brings up until he returns to the surface.

Don't you begin to discover these elements earlier, when you are cutting the film? Or is cutting still part of this enigmatic creative process where the subconscious participates?

Cutting is a more delicate matter. While I can sustain all sorts of human interference during shooting, and am sometimes even stimulated by the groups of schoolchildren that are brought to the studio or by tourists snapping everything with their automatic cameras—because all this probably appeals to my secret nature of being a circus showman—I can't have anybody around when I am cutting. This is where the film begins to breathe. It's a bit like Frankenstein carrying the body that has been composed of various human bits to the top of the tower during a stormy night to expose it to the lightning which will give it life. The cutting table, the moviola, is like the catafalque upon which Frankenstein's body is presented to the streaks of lightning, and there it lies, waiting to begin its respiration, its life.

But it is still not an overview of the film, because even on the cutting table you can't look at more than 300 meters of film at any one time. So I just forge ahead, I keep on cutting [the Italian word for cutting, *montare*, is much more appropriate here, since it means a putting-together, a winding-up, rather than a cutting-away, a selection. GB], and I never look at the whole until I finish. And it is only when I have gone through the entire film and have put together a first cut that I allow myself to look at it in a projection room. That is the projection of *8½* you mentioned. You will remember how doubtful I was at the time—I remember asking you how you thought the film would be received in America—but my doubts then really mean that the answer to your question now is no, that I don't discover all the subconscious things in the film until much later, and in any case later than in the cutting room:

That first projection, on the other hand, does signify the beginning of the film's autonomy. It is here that

it begins to free itself from my paternal tyranny and starts to cut its umbilical cord. It's the most emotional moment of the whole process, because for the first time, at this moment, Frankenstein moves.

You are right in saying that this is the most beautiful projection of a film, and that it is an experience that cannot be repeated. Because you still have to dub the voices in, still have to write the music, still have to put all the finishing touches on and make the final cuts, you are looking at the film with great benevolence, knowing that it will be better, although it will never be as alive as in that projection.

The heart of the author is still in it, you hear his voice and the voices you hadn't planned on, you feel the life of the crew on the set as a pulsating being, the constant chatter—I never stop talking on the set—and then, of course, the atmosphere is still all there, the excitement of shooting, the mood you were in when making the film can still be felt: a far-away church bell, the screech of a tram in a curve. It's not only the life on the set which this projection evokes, but the life that surrounded the set, the studio—you can practically smell the area of town where you had shot. It's extraordinarily fascinating.

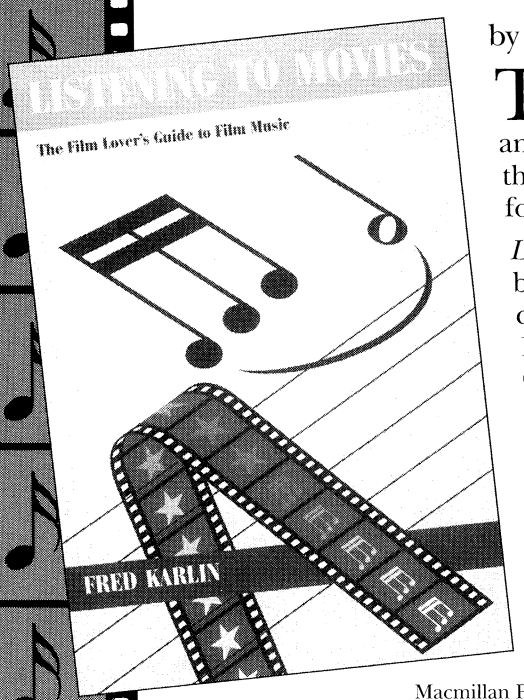
This then is the moment—in order to finally answer your question—where the film suddenly reveals its completion, shows its character. And this then is the moment when the film takes on a personality which you may not have planned. And it's out of your hands. All the finishing touches—everything that follows—tend to make the personality of the film more precise, but they also take away some of the charm of that initial recognition that your child is alive and independent. In the end, when all is in the can, I really no longer want to be involved. The film is on its way through its own life. To remain too long in the atmosphere and the pull of your creature is dangerous.

But I don't feel that the film is leaving me. I am leaving the film. I'm not a good mother.

■ Gideon Bachmann is the Rome Editor of *Film Quarterly*.

LISTENING TO MOVIES

The Film Lover's Guide to Film Music



by FRED KARLIN

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Bill Nichols

Discovering Form, Inferring Meaning

New Cinemas and the Film Festival Circuit

The Festival Phenomenon

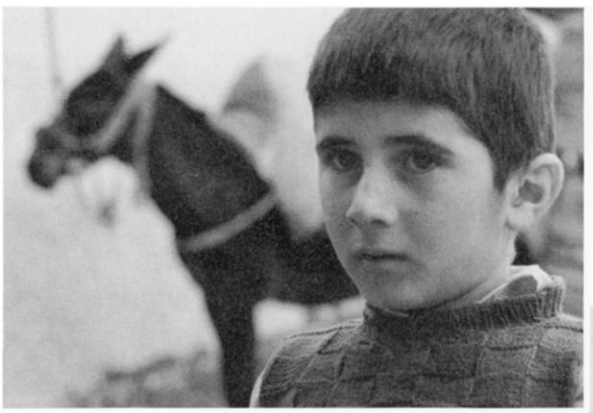
How do we encounter cinemas, and cultures, not our own? One of the latest "discoveries" on the international film festival circuit, postrevolutionary cinema from Iran, occasions this question.[1] (The accompanying filmography identifies the specific films addressed here.) Usually, the context in which such films reach us is neglected as we pass on to a discussion of style, themes, auteurs, and national culture. In order to render the viewing context and its crucial mediating role less transparent, this essay provides an account of the film festival experience. It focuses on how this experience inflects and constructs the meanings we ascribe to one of the newest in a continuous succession of "new cinemas" while we at the same time constitute the very audience needed to recognize and appreciate such cinemas as distinct and valued entities.[2]

The usual opening gambit in the discovery of new cinemas is the claim that these works deserve international attention because of their discovery by a festival. This gambit has its echo in the writings of popular critics. Films from nations not previously regarded as prominent film-producing countries receive praise for their ability to transcend local issues and provincial tastes while simultaneously providing a window onto a different culture. We are invited to receive such films as evidence of artistic maturity—the work of directors ready to take their place within an international fraternity of auteurs—and of a distinctive national culture—work that remains distinct from Hollywood-based norms both in style and theme. Examples from festival catalogues of newly discovered cinemas and auteurs:

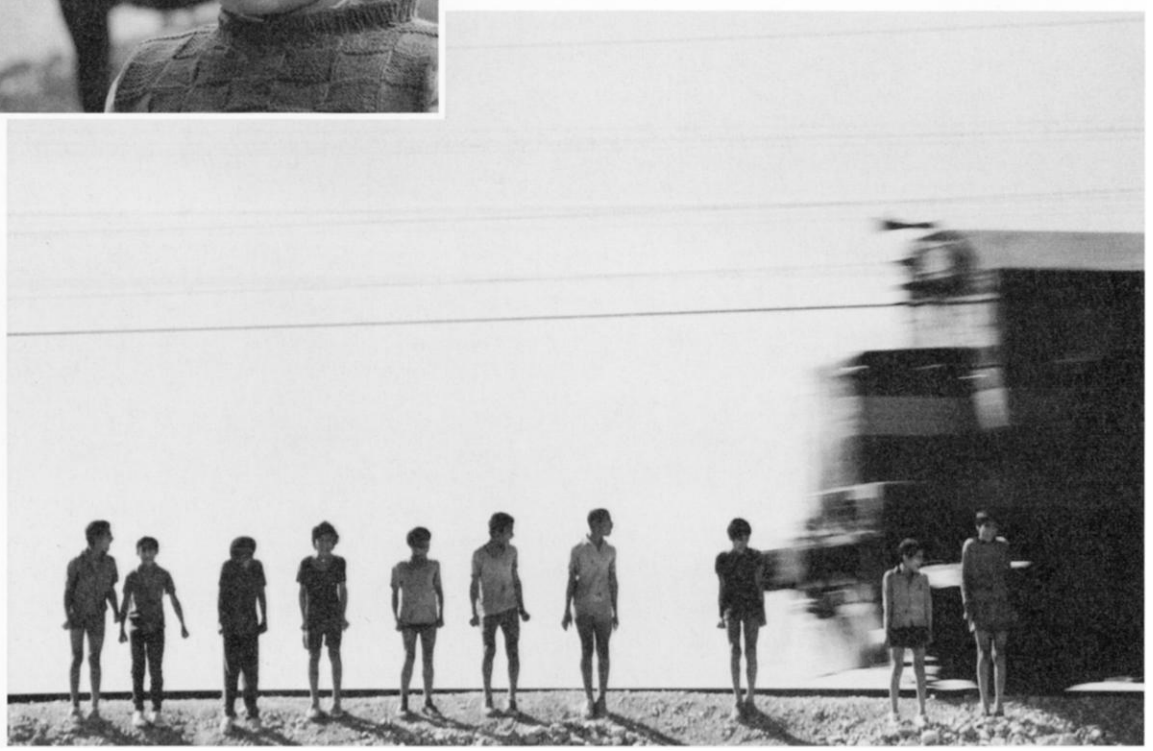
> Guy Maddin's eye-popping new film *Careful* [confirms] the director of *Archangel* and *Tales From the Gimli Hospital* as one of the most inventive and stylistically ambitious filmmakers working, not just in Canada, but anywhere.[3]

> [New Iranian filmmakers'] success has been confirmed by the dozens of prizes these filmmakers have received from prestigious film festivals worldwide.[4]

> The festival is designed to serve as a window through which audiences may be able to glimpse for the first time important aspects of [Australia's] vital film culture.[5]



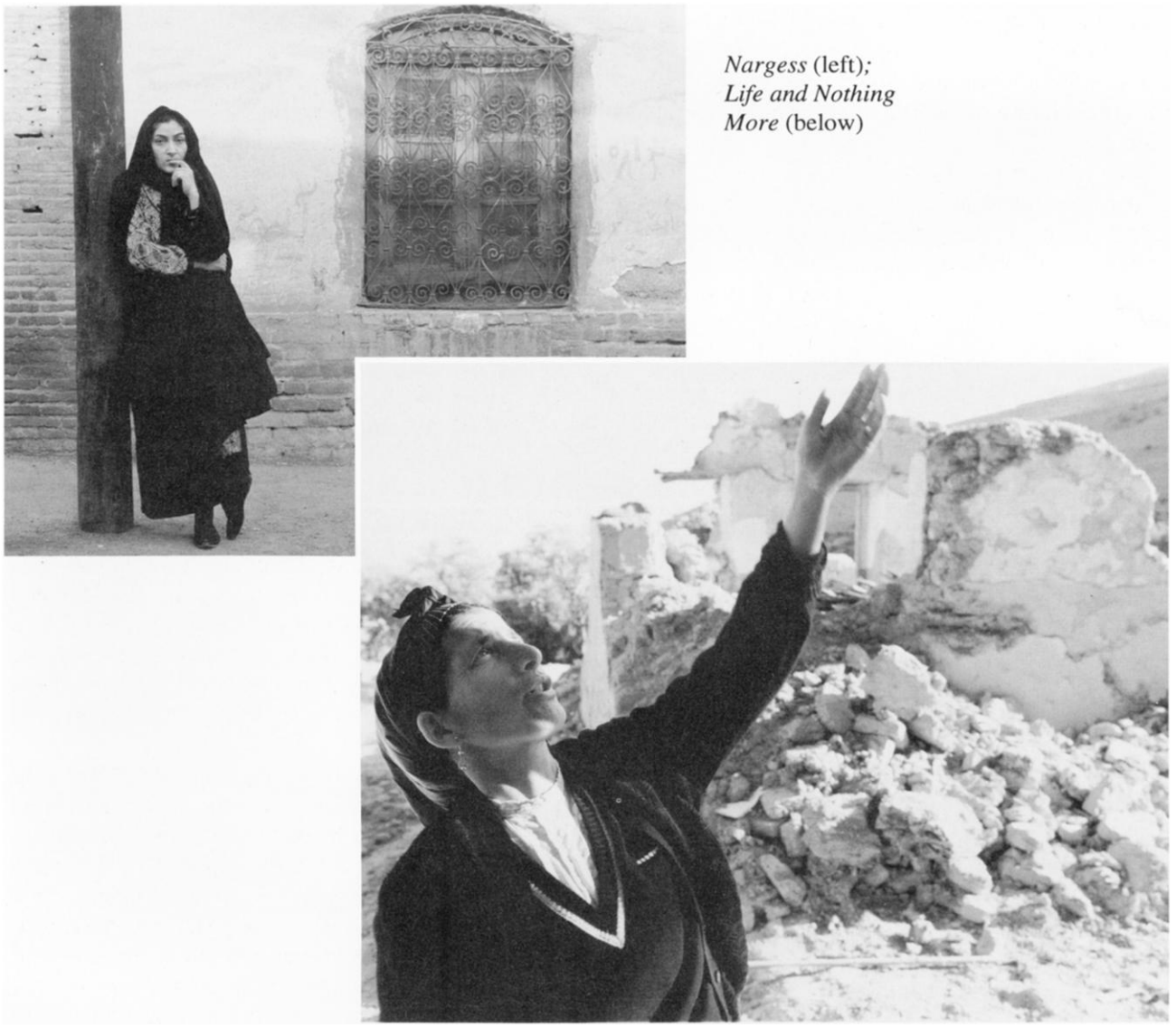
Where Is the Friend's Home? (left);
The Runner (below)



The styles and subjects [of films in the "Contemporary World Cinema" category] are quite diverse; they all, nonetheless, bear the hallmark of their creators, say something about the cultures from which they spring, and have impressed the programmer with their individuality.[6]

Such commentary constructs a framework of assumptions and expectations. Individual films gain value both for their regional distinctiveness and for their universal appeal. We learn about other portions of the world and acknowledge the ascendancy of new artists to international acclaim. Like the anthropological fieldworker, or, more casually, the tourist, we are also invited to submerge ourselves in an experience of difference, entering strange worlds, hearing unfamiliar languages, witnessing unusual styles. The emphasis, in a climate of festivity, is not solely on edification but also on the experience of the new and unexpected itself.

An encounter with the unfamiliar, the experience of something strange, the discovery of new voices and visions serve as a major incitement for the festival-goer. Cinema, with its distinctly dream-like state of reception, induces a vivid but imaginary mode of participatory observation. The possibility of losing oneself, temporarily, of "going native" in the confines of a movie theater, offers its own compelling fascination. Iranian films, for example, usher us into a world of wind, sand, and dust, of veiled women and stoic men, of unusual tempos and foreign rhythms. The international film festival, and the new directors and new visions offered by it, affords an ideal opportunity to enjoy the pleasures of film's imaginary signifiers.[7]



Nargess (left); *Life and Nothing More* (below)

Though imaginary, these signifiers and their pleasures are also real. We hesitate to lift the veil from such appearances. There is a reverie in the fascination with the strange, an abiding pleasure in the recognition of differences that persists beyond the moment. Even though the festival-goer receives encouragement to make the strange familiar, to recover difference as similarity (most classically through the discovery of a common humanity, a family of man [sic] spanning time and space, culture and history), another form of pleasure resides in the experience of strangeness itself. To the extent that this aspect of the festival experience does not reaffirm or collapse readily into the prevailing codes of hegemonic Hollywood cinema, it places the international film festival within a transnational and well-nigh postmodern location. Our participation in this realm qualifies us as citizens of a global but still far from homogenous culture.

Recovering the strange as familiar takes two forms: first, acknowledgment of an international film style (formal innovation; psychologically complex, ambiguous, poetic, allegorical, or restrained characterizations; rejection of Hollywood norms for the representation of time and space; lack of clear resolution or narrative closure; and so on), and second, the retrieval of insights or lessons about a different culture (often recuperated yet further by the simultaneous discovery of an underlying, crosscultural humanity). These two processes (discovering form, inferring meaning) define the act of making sense from new experience. They are the means by which we go beyond submergence in the moment to the extraction of more disembodied critical

knowledge. They parallel the paths by which objects from other cultures have been assimilated to our own aesthetic tradition or made to stand as typifications of that other culture (as works of art or as ethnographic artifacts).

A vivid demonstration of this process, indeed a great performance in its annals, is Clifford Geertz's account of the meaning and structure of cockfights in Balinese culture.[8] In his essay "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," Geertz offers a paradigmatic example of how bewildering personal experience slowly yields to systematic knowledge and crosscultural understanding. The essay remains a persuasive, sophisticated justification for the experience of difference, mystery, and wonder, and a celebration of our capacity to understand what is not of our own making. As tourists, or film festival-goers, we, too, seek to understand what others have made and to fathom the meaning it has for those who made it.

This whole procedure has a serious limitation that Geertz passingly acknowledges: "The culture of a people is an ensemble of texts, themselves ensembles, which the anthropologist strains to read over the shoulders of those to whom they properly belong."[9] What Geertz fails to pursue is what it might feel like to those to whom such culture properly belongs to have someone looking over their shoulder, and what it feels like to Geertz to occupy this position.[10] (He also explicitly rejects any concept of interpretation that would introduce ideology or politics, seeing this, like the functionalism he opposes, as reductive.) In anthropology, we need to observe observers observing if we are to understand what it is they ultimately present as observations, and, in cinema, we need to ask what kind of experience the experience of cultural difference is within the constraints of the film festival circuit: how do we enter into such experience, what processes govern it, what goals propel it, and what sense of self does it engender? These questions are part and parcel of our more detached pronouncements on the distinctive qualities of cinemas from elsewhere.

An aid to moving past the point at which culture can be understood as a text, or semiotic system, a level of understanding which Geertz did much to institutionalize within cultural studies, is E. Ann Kaplan's nomination of two kinds of textual understanding. Kaplan asserts that critics from elsewhere may uncover meanings not found by critics from the same culture as the text. For strangers, two fundamental reading strategies then present themselves: the aesthetic and the political.[11] Aesthetic readings may be either "humanist/individual" or genre-oriented. Political readings can emphasize economic, ideological, or institutional concerns.[12] Kaplan herself chooses a combination of aesthetic (generic) and political (historically and institutionally specific) readings for a sample of recent Chinese films, but the menu she proposes has general application for viewers as well as critics.

Not without pitfalls. The recovery of strangeness by means of induction into an international art cinema/film festival aesthetic clearly does not so much uncover a preexisting meaning as layer on a meaning that did not exist prior to the circuit of exchange that festivals themselves constitute. (Likewise, this process constitutes a new layer of audience, the film festival-goer, to supplement an initially more local one.) And the political will be refracted not only by our own repertoire of theories, methods, assumptions, and values, but also by our limited knowledge of corresponding concepts in the other cultures to which we attend.[13] (To want to know of foreign cinemas, for example, of their indebtedness to state control often betrays our own ideology of the free market and artistic license. We ask more to gain reassurance that this is a cinema like the one we imagine our own to be than to explore the intricacies of the relationship between culture, ideology, and the state.)

Part of what we want to discover in our film festival encounters is something akin to what Dean MacCannell calls "back region" knowledge.[14] Like the tourist, we hope to go behind appearances, to grasp the meaning of things as those who present them would, to step outside our (inescapable) status as outsiders and diagnosticians to attain a more intimate, more authentic form of experience. Festivals, like museums and tourist sites, foster and accommodate such desire. A festival allows us a "back region" glimpse into another culture through the film-makers and actors it presents in person. Of considerable value to my own understanding of Iranian cinema, for example, was Mohammad Attebai, of the Farabi Cinema Foundation, distributor of the new Iranian films.[15]

Attebai explained that Farabi has an arms-length relationship to the government and that it facilitates production loans for new features that are made not by the government but by the private sector. (Banks provide the actual loans.) The Ministry of Culture regulates the import and export of films in Iran and limits foreign, particularly U.S., films severely. In 1991, 46 new Iranian films were released in Iran, but only one U.S. film. In 1992, *Dances with Wolves* and *Driving Miss Daisy* were licensed for exhibition, but the bulk of Iranian cinemas show Iranian films (and pay a tax, higher for foreign than domestic films, that in turn

subsidizes Farabi and new film production). The Ministry reserves the right to censor scripts or films, usually after they are screened at the annual Fajr Film Festival. Censorship prevents outright criticism of the fundamentalist government, but it does not mean that films must serve to legitimate it either. As in China, film-makers have considerable freedom to make what they can get funded, knowing that direct attacks (but not necessarily aesthetically esteemed ones) will hinder their own advancement. The primary goal seems to be support of Iranian national culture rather than creation of governmental or pan-national Islamic propaganda.

Every year, Attebai explained, Farabi organizes the Fajr Festival and the Ministry of Culture classifies films into four categories, "A" through "D," on the basis of their perceived quality (a mix, apparently, of formal and social criteria). The "A" and "B" films receive greater distribution support, they can command higher box-office prices, and their makers receive priority for further film-making proposals. "C" and "D" rated films receive far less support and their makers must struggle harder to make another film. Television remains a fairly separate entity, although some films receive partial financing from this source. Videocassette players remain officially forbidden, although Attebai admits that videotapes are a major black-market source of foreign films.

Back-region or behind-the-scenes information such as this gives us as festival-goers an edge over those who see the films in regular distribution. Such information, presented casually, is nonetheless far from haphazard. The order of presentation and the rhetorical emphases are not invented on the spot. Iranian film representatives learn, with experience, what predispositions and doubts loom foremost in the festival-goer's mind. Their answers aim to satisfy our curiosity, assuage our suspicion, arouse our sympathies, and heighten our appreciation. As with most contemporary forms of crosscultural encounter, an inevitable degree of knowing calculation enters into the experience on both sides.

Like the ethnographer, we may know full well that the pursuit of intimate knowledge and authenticity is illusory. We may know full well that we can only produce knowledge that will situate and place *us*, that affords insight into the "back regions" of our own construction of self, conception of state, culture, or aesthetic value. We know full well and yet, all the same. . . . This dialectic of knowing and forgetting, experiencing strangeness and recovering the familiar, knowing that they know we know that they calibrate their information to our preexisting assumptions as we watch this process of mutually orchestrated disclosure unfold, becomes a reward in itself. The hunger for the new, fueled by those events and institutions that provide the commodities that imperfectly and temporarily satisfy it, also produces a distinct type of consumer and a historically specific sense of self. We seek out that which might transform us, often within an arena devoted to perpetuating this very search indefinitely.

Encountering Iranian Cinema

How can we address the questions posed by Iranian cinema for us? The "we" invoked here is the one that includes myself: white, Western, middle-class festival-goers and commentators for whom these issues of crosscultural reading are freighted with specific historical (colonial and postcolonial) hazards. To the extent that film festivals occur globally, from Hong Kong to Havana, this "we" has the potential to include many other social groupings for which additional modifications would need to be made. The types of experience and acts of making sense described here are not unique to white, Western audiences, but neither are they identical among all festival-goers.

"For us" is the caveat that allows for a level of authenticity, to use that existential vocabulary, at the same moment as it guarantees a lack of finality. To what extent does the humanist framework encouraged by film festivals and the popular press not only steer our readings in selected directions but also obscure alternative readings or discourage their active pursuit? Is transformation possible, or have we already become the postmodern, schizoid subjects whose identity revolves around successive transformations?[16] We cannot approach such films with any claims to expertise, lest it be the expertise of those versed in the ways of festival viewing itself. (My expertise lies more in the realm of film festival-going than in Iranian film and culture.) As festival-goers, we leave the more exacting hermeneutic sciences to the experts.[17]

What we do, over the course of the first few films we see, is look for patterns, testing for the presence of those we already know and seeking to discover those we do not. (These auto-ethnographic comments focus on the 12 Iranian films I saw at the 1992 Toronto Film Festival from the 18 films chosen to represent postrevolutionary Iranian cinema.) Iranian films immediately signal their difference. They exude a certain austerity and render characters with a high degree of restraint, much closer to the work of a Chantal Akerman

or Robert Bresson than a Bertolucci or Greenaway. One of the first interpretive frames we can eliminate is the paradigm of Hollywood film. Numerous qualities present in most Hollywood films are absent from Iranian ones.

Most visibly absent are sex and violence. Sex and violence are code words for the two great axes of most Western narrative: issues of domestic order (love, romance, sex; the family and desire) and issues of social order (violence, power, control; law and order). Characters typically move within the force fields set up by these two overlapping and intertwined domains, seeking, questing, pursuing, overcoming obstacles, solving enigmas, and achieving or failing to achieve resolution (most emblematically the righting of wrongs and the union of the heterosexual couple). The propelling force of these two axes is not altogether lost in Iranian cinema, but its conflictual, goal-seeking charge, and its tight, existential, expressive linkage to highly individuated characters is. Typical themes in our cinema—greed, ambition, lust, passion, courtship, betrayal, manipulation, prowess, and performance—have minimal hold.

Similarly, question of gender identity and subjectivity receive little emphasis. The bulk of central characters are male and most issues pertain primarily to them. These issues seldom pit the masculine against the feminine but rather provide an arena for the exploration of proper conduct for members of either sex. Only *Nargess* presents central women characters. Made by a woman director, it helps throw a light on questions of gender in relation to proper conduct that the other films may very well finesse.

Also absent are explicit references to religion and the state. Common Western stereotypes of fanaticism and zealotry are neither confirmed nor subverted. They are simply absent, of no local concern. (In post-screening discussion, and interviews, the Iranian film-makers disavow any desire to preach or agitate.) With the exception of the comedy, *The Tenants*, the government is not presented as the source of solutions to individual problems. (That it is so presented *in a comedy* may confirm the general rule.) Similarly, although many of the films present situations of extreme hardship, suggestions of causative agents are largely absent. Governmental bureaucracy, corporate corruption, abuse of political power, economic exploitation (by big business, international cartels, and local *compradors)*, the urban dynamics of gentrification or rural emiseration, conflicts between modernization and traditional values, between abstinence and indulgence, drugs, alcohol, or other vices and either their criminal penetration of the social fabric or revelations of their individual effect—all are absent. Individuals may live apart or be compelled to endure considerable adversity but they do not convey any of the existential alienation, ennui, or antisocial, psychotic behavior so prevalent in Western cinema. Self-proclaimed misfits, rebels, loners, and outsiders all seem essentially absent.

Most forms of cinematic expressivity are minimally present. We find no magical realism, no expressionism, surrealism, collage, or bold figures of montage. Melodramatic intensities, or excess, are extremely rare, far from constituting the type of contrapuntal *system* found in Sirk or Fassbinder. Point-of-view dynamics are usually weak to nonexistent. The great majority of scenes unfold in a third-person, long-take, long-shot, minimally edited style. There is only limited use of music and even dialogue.

This process of elimination, as part of our search for an interpretative frame, also eliminates a small portion of the audience. Expectations that go unfulfilled here may drive some viewers to alternative screenings. But most viewers press on in their search for meaning, with little contextual information to rely on beyond word of mouth, festival notes, after-screening discussions, and local reviews.

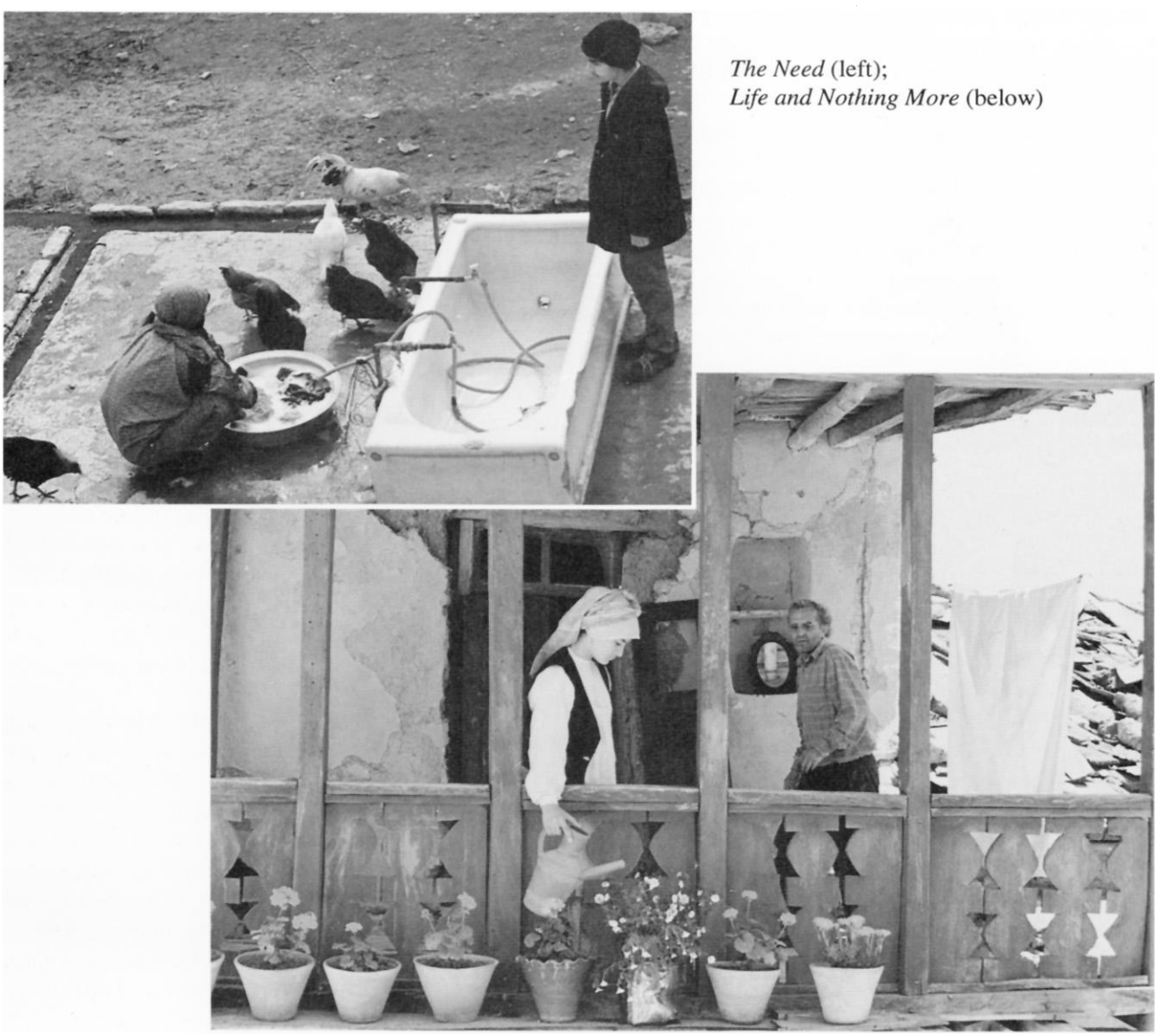
Spinning Webs of Significance

What frame, then, might fit these films? Does such austerity amount to a cinema of abnegation? Of asceticism? Of secular retreat and sacred ritual? It would seem not. For one thing, several of the qualities just described (the family and desire, law and order) are present, but not in the ways we expect. We find their intensity muted, their purpose altered. In many cases the films pivot around familial issues: a young boy's resolve to find a job after the death of his father (*The Need*); a clash between two brothers for the proceeds from the sale of their home to the national oil company (*Beyond the Fire*); attempts by a couple to have their new baby adopted for fear that it will become crippled like their first four children (*The Peddler*); the search of a young boy for his family in a region of howling winds, desert sands, and severe drought (*Water, Wind, Dust*); and the differing outlooks of husbands and wives in both *Nargess* and *Stony Lion*. In many of these films, questions of the social order play a determining part: issues of identity, appropriation, and privacy in *Close Up* and *The Peddler*; of tribal honor in *Stony*

Lion; of social responsibility in *The Key*, *Where Is the Friend's Home?*, *Life and Nothing More,* and of loyalty, honor, and honesty in *Nargess.* And yet, the potential conflicts that such issues present are not given the dramatic intensity found in our mainstream cinema. (The shooting style and arrangement of scenes contribute significantly to this result.) The moral and emotional center to the films lies elsewhere. We press on with our search.

Take revenge as an example. Seeking revenge is a highly masculine activity, sometimes tempered, in Hollywood, with the counterbalancing need for feminine compassion and perspective, but almost always acted out by men.[18] In Iranian cinema, too, if there is revenge to be had, it is men who must have it. And yet, the intensity and tonality of revenge changes. As with other aspects of character development, this theme goes understated, diminished in narrative force and audience impact. *Stony Lion* ultimately criticizes the very principle, and the vividly linear drive of revenge stories toward a fateful conclusion runs seriously awry in *Beyond the Fire*.

The type of obsessive intensity found in films like *The Naked Spur* or *Cape Fear* dissipates rather than building to a climax. Instead of a brutal showdown, *Beyond the Fire* ends with the brothers ineffectually grappling each other as the mother wails in lament and the young woman the returning brother tried to court attempts to retrieve her bracelets from the scorched sand beneath the burning plumes of excess gas.



The Need (left);
Life and Nothing More (below)

If anything, *Beyond the Fire* converts an apparent revenge motif into a study of honor, obligation, and tradition that each character must confront alone. Upholding a principle becomes more important than acting out the psychic intensity of an obsession such as revenge. Something more like a sense of proper conduct akin to the Hindu notion of dharma seems at stake, even in cases where we find women filling central roles (*Nargess*).

This deflection of drama—from its individual bearers (characters) to a more contemplative realm—also operates in terms of visual style. This is a cinema of long shots and long takes. Close-ups are rare, music amplifying the emotional tone of scenes is unusual, editing to establish psychological realism or the effects of montage hardly exists, expressive uses of lighting, gesture, posture, mise-en-scène, camera angle, or camera movement are equally rare.[19]

The sense of an austere, economic style that passes no judgment but simply records what happens, underlies the numerous long shots in *The Runner*, *Beyond the Fire*, *Water, Wind, Dust*, and *Stony Lion*, and in all Kiarostami's films (*Life and Nothing More, Close Up, Where Is the Friend's Home?*, and *The Key*, for which Kiarostami wrote the script). Placing characters in a larger context does not heighten our awareness of forces working upon them so much as suggest the power of forces working beyond them. It produces a sense of remove without a corresponding sense of indifference.

The effect is quite vivid in *The Runner,* where long shots of the young protagonist, Amiro, situate him against the backdrop of an Iranian seaport with all its elements of raw labor, abandoned ships and machines, transient workers, and precarious lives, and yet the film does not use this image of a brute, industrial harbor to cast blame or mirror the psychological qualities of its characters. Unlike *Pixote* or *Los Olvidados*, *The Runner* sidesteps issues of rivalry and desire, crime and desperation. Amiro's vision is fixed on the horizon established in these long shots, and his dream of escape seems more existential than foolish or tragic.

By this point, the festival-goer has gained measurable proficiency. Categories of style, or aesthetics, and meaning, or politics, take on the appearance of empirical certainty. As we encounter further films, we seek first to confirm these categories, cognizant of the distinct possibility, particularly at moments of unexpected variation, that they remain entirely malleable. This mixture of certitude and precariousness gives the festival experience a heightened degree of intensity.

At least within this sample, the sense of austerity gains constant reinforcement. For example, in *Water, Wind, Dust,* the young boy protagonist spends a large part of the film traversing a huge lake bed that has become a seemingly endless desert of blowing sand and howling wind in search of his family. In one dramatic scene, the boy carries two goldfish he accidentally discovers back to a well he passed earlier. But he spills their bowl of water just as he reaches the well, and he can only watch them die.

The episode is told entirely in long and medium shots. When the fish die there is no close-up of their flopping bodies nor of the boy's reaction. Instead a long shot impassively records the scene as he watches the fish we can barely see. The shot concludes when he sets out on his journey once again and leaves the unflinching frame.

The result, we may conclude, is a type of Old Testament austerity that pushes moral issues into a foreground left unoccupied by the characters who embody them. Alizera Davudnezhad, director of *The Need*, comments during an interview:

> I do not want to interpret reality but to capture the moment, the real thing that is happening in front of the camera. Reality for me is in the present, as that thin space between past and future, with its infinity of possibilities. I do not seek to retain control of what happens but to create the atmosphere and space for the actors to take over and for me to record.[20]

That characters struggle against formidable odds, though, encourages a more pointedly political reading in which tales of adversity provide a critical, if not subversive, perspective on postrevolutionary Iran. This reading may well be fueled more by our own predispositions than by what the Iranian film-makers themselves say. Its prevalence in critical commentary is, in any case, remarkably consistent.

Commentary on Mohsen Makmalbaf's trilogy of three short stories, *The Peddler*, exemplifies the discovery of a familiar tale of the plight of the poor. *Variety* noted *The Peddler* looks at "the underbelly of life in contemporary Iran," (11/30/88); the London Film Festival program called it a "vivid portrayal of those at the bottom of the pile"; the Rivertown Film Festival in Minneapolis described it as a "fascinating journey through the poor urban dwellers of contemporary Iran"; in *The New York Times* Janet Maslin marveled how "It takes for granted a devastating, almost

unbearably high level of misery"; an anonymous reviewer cited in the Iranian press clippings spoke of how "the film charts the lower depths of modern-day Iran"; and a *Film Comment* reviewer announced, "It's the strongest hell-on-earth movie since *Taxi Driver*."[21]

This remarkable unanimity of opinion, however, is at odds with the Iranian directors' own views, and their films' style. To hear the directors speak of their work following festival screenings (or to interview them as I was able to do) generates a different picture. Hardship and poverty are clearly in evidence but serve neither as the focus for covert political criticism nor for expressions of moral condemnation. Designating the films as hell-on-earth, lower-depths, "kitchen sink" style of film-making seems to flow from a perspective different from the film-makers'. (The extent to which their perspective is calibrated for those who might listen back in Iran or to assert a difference from prevailing forms of social consciousness in the West remains part of the speculative game of fathoming unfathomable intentions and motivations.)

> DAVUDNEZHAD: In order to answer the question [what is the source of the problems characters face?], I have to become a sociologist. But I am not a political analyst or sociologist. I can't tell you the causes of misery or poverty. If you watch the film carefully, you will find the reasons in the film. The film speaks and reveals my opinion in what happens in the moment. We may have different philosophic frames when we speak of poverty, and if we do not have a common definition, we may only compound the difficulties with misunderstanding.

> KIAROSTAMI: This cinema's role is not to express a solution to problems but to express the problems themselves. Whenever it shows causes or solutions, it deteriorates, it gets worse. The dictators and diplomats show solutions, not film-makers. They know the problems and they know the solutions. That is the reason that there are problems. If I show the problem, then perhaps the people can find a solution.

Hardship, adversity, natural calamity, and widespread poverty align themselves less with social issues than with a more diffuse quality of acceptance. Not in the sense of resignation (none of the characters in these films evidence resignation no matter how extraordinary the odds), but in the sense of a persistent, nonjudgmental pursuit of altruistic goals no matter how difficult the process or unpromising the outcome. And in films like *The Runner*, *Nargess*, *Where Is the Friend's Home?*, *Life and Nothing More*, and *Water, Wind, Dust*, the motif of acceptance (including a disregard for personal gain or likelihood of success) operates pervasively. We seem to have determined a major category of social meaning.

"Tell me what you know." "I know nothing."

This exchange, between the protagonist of *Life and Nothing More* and one of the earthquake victims he encounters on his journey, epitomizes the use of laconic, highly restrained, almost Biblical dialogue in these Iranian films. Those qualities of inconsequential but phatic communication designed to maintain contact, and those idiosyncratic vocal embellishments that signal personality in Hollywood cinema, seem limited to Iranian comedies, where many of the values of the dramas find themselves inverted. Numerous scenes and sometimes entire films (*Water, Wind, Dust*; *The Key*) unfold with a bare minimum of dialogue. When words are spoken they are of the essence. This uninflected, laconic directness may give the appearance of rudeness to Western viewers. We need additional guidance to know how to assess what we hear and to relate it to the quality of acceptance.

In one scene in *The Need*, for example, the mother of the young hero, Ali, asks why he seems to tired. (We know, but she does not, that he has spent most of the day trying to find a job in the aftermath of his father's death.) The son ignores her question. The mother makes no more of it.

> DAVUDNEZHAD: You may not understand [such scenes] if you live in the Western world. It is not the rational or polite etiquette of the west. One reason he did not answer is in order not to tell his mother that he is making a sacrifice [by seeking a job at the expense of his schoolwork]. Because the more he gives an explanation, which the mother wants, the more he would have to explain his altruistic intentions and that would spoil it. That's why he is ignoring her in a good way, which doesn't bother her. If he answers he must tell the truth

and he doesn't want to reveal the truth so it is better not to speak. It is not rude.

Not speaking in this context is quite different from stoic self-denial or from the muttering incoherence of classic anti-heroes, who must do in action what they cannot put into words. It approximates, verbally, the acceptance of a social responsibility. (And if this matter whets our curiosity sufficiently, we might turn to a common source like the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, which, under the heading "Iran," refers to the Iranian virtue of *taqiyah* as the concealment of one's true feelings.)

DAVUDNEZHAD: To show off in Iranian culture is like a lie. It is pretentious. Being pretentious is worse than adultery. The word for it is very bad.

QUESTION: Would the wayward brother in Beyond the Fire, *who has used his profits to buy cosmetics, hair spray, gaudy shirts, and magazines exemplify this vice?*
DAVUDNEZHAD: Yes, he is very influenced by Western culture. He has been morally corrupted by bad influences, not by economics per se but by what he has done with the family's money.

Where Is the Friend's Home?, *Life and Nothing More*, *Stony Lion*, and *The Need* all conclude with a gesture of significant but unobtrusive sacrifice. Perhaps most vivid in *The Need*, Ali discovers in the penultimate scene that Reza, his rival for the one available job, has a bedridden father who cannot work. We do not know what his thought process is, but in the final scene Ali is no longer in the print shop. Instead we see him in another small shop, producing what look like touristic artifacts. An authorial silence, or reluctance to moralize, leaves us to draw our own conclusions as we watch the young man silently working, the only figure in the frame.

The transition from Ali's visit to Reza's home to the workshop at film's end provides an indirectness that begins to seem typical of this sample of Iranian cinema. It suggests a form of storytelling that could be called inferential. Rather than building "hooks" and bridges with dialogue or sound, rather than suggesting the linear movement from cause to effect, and rather than evoking overtonal or associative connections, inferential storytelling moves without comment from one situation to a later consequence. It sidesteps causality with indirection.

One of the most impressive uses of inferential storytelling involves virtually no editing at all. This is the final scene of *Life and Nothing More*. In this scene, the father is told by two boys to whom he has offered a ride that he must drive up an extremely steep hill if he is to reach his destination, Quoker. (This is the town where the two boys who starred in *Where Is the Friend's Home?* live. The father, surrogate for Kiarostami, wants to find them in the wake of a devastating earthquake.) After dropping off his two young passengers, the father continues his journey, passing a man carrying a heavy gas cylinder on the way. When he reaches the steep hill, the camera retreats to a long shot, showing the car and the hill together. The camera never moves from this distant position. The father tries gunning his engine and dashing up the hill but fails. He starts again. On his next attempt, the man with the cylinder has caught up to him. The man helps him reposition the car and then moves along. The father tries again, successfully, and passes the man with the cylinder for a second time without a pause. Then, after getting beyond the steepest part, he stops, waits, and gives the man a ride. (Some festival audience members laugh at this point; some applaud.) The father drives onward, still seen in long shot, as the film concludes.

Abbas Kiarostami offered his own interpretation:

Looking for these two kids wasn't a sufficient pretext for the film. Forty to fifty thousand people were killed [in the earthquake]. The fate of the two kids who were in *Where Is the Friend's Home?* was not as important as the fate of the larger number of injured and suffering. What he needed to address was life, the continuity of life itself, not individuals and their fate, though that is the initial pretext, the starting point for the larger lesson.
So, at the end of the film, I wanted to throw attention onto the father and the people he meets, like the two boys, rather than on the missing, whose fate we do not know.
In the previous scene there were two boys who advised the main character that he had to go up the hill without stopping, but he couldn't do it: he didn't have sufficient understanding. Then the two missing kids became less important to him. He came to see the two boys he gave a ride to in the place of the missing boys, and the film originally ended there.

> Earlier, we saw that the father had to face many obstacles, and at the end we see that he has surmounted the most difficult obstacle of all but that it no longer matters in the same way. He stops and helps the man, and then continues. Helping that man, who is real and alive, but unclear, unidentified, is more important than going to look for those two kids, those two almost imaginary figments or characters. The final [long] shot gives him a new reason and purpose that is more balanced and full of greater respect for the living than those whose fate is unknown.

It remains for the audience to infer the meanings Kiarostami provides in this interview. Without the single-minded pursuit of a goal by a character whom we come to know better and better, the film exhibits a more episodic structure that may appear to meander and be built from unrelated occurrences. These occurrences, however, join together to intensify the need for an active, inference-making form of engagement. Gradually, helped by back-region information, the festival-goer achieves an understanding which allows patterns such as this to emerge.

Drawing Lessons

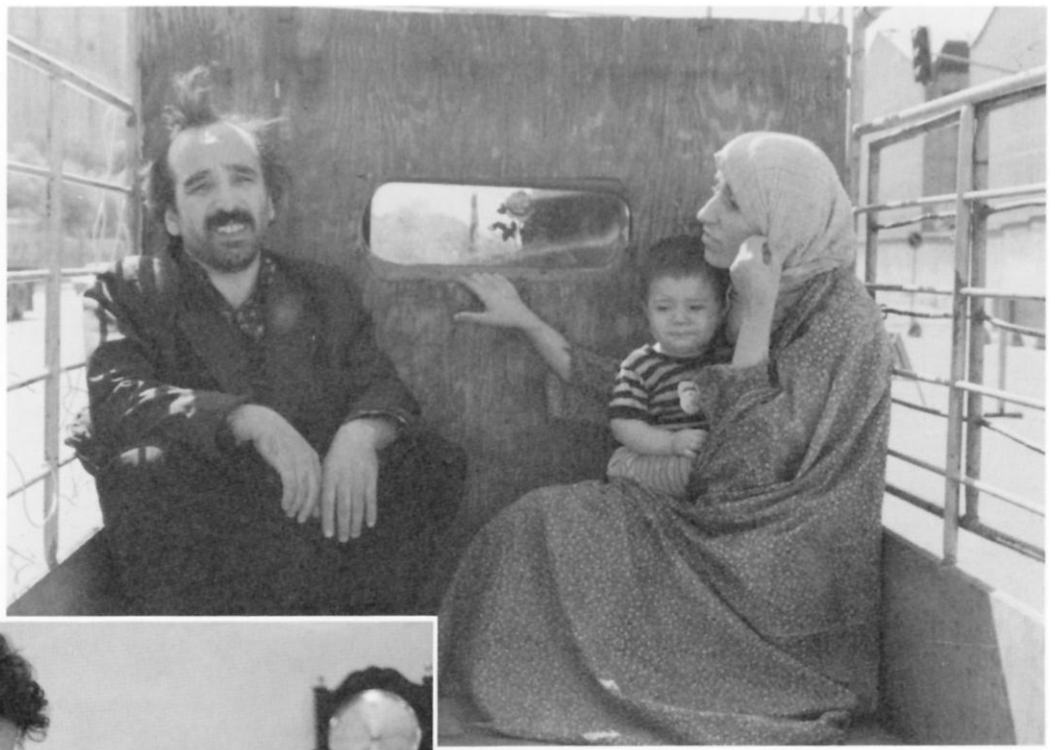
A laconic, almost Biblical form of dialogue, a long-take, long-shot shooting style, the restricted utilization of irony, suspense, and character identification, episodic plot form, inferential storytelling, and an attenuated reliance on goals yield a cinema of austerity. Sparse, frugal, economic. Complex and subtle in what goes unsaid or understated. The result is distinct from all four modes of film production suggested by David Bordwell: Iranian cinema departs from the Hollywood emphasis on linear, causal plot development and its axes of sex and violence, adventure and romance; it abstains from the vivid, even exaggerated treatment of plot used to tell relatively simple stories in classic Soviet cinema; it lacks the existential ambiguities of European art cinema; and, although it may superficially resemble the "parametric" cinema of Bresson, Dreyer, Ozu, and a few others, it does not draw our attention to formal modulations of stylistic parameters as a primary focus.[22]

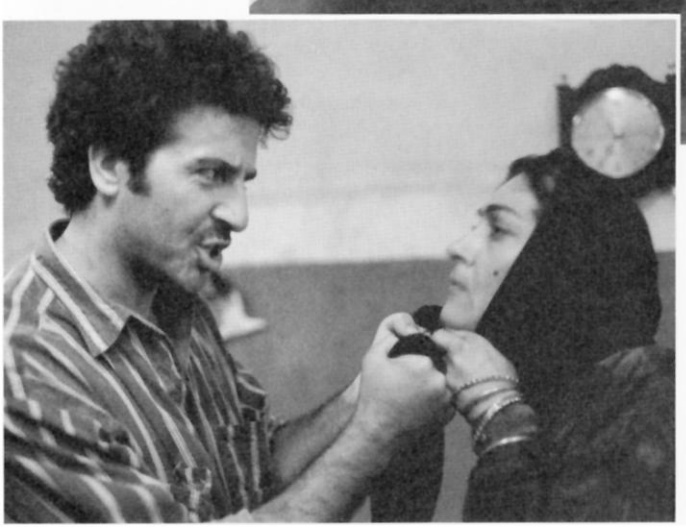
The festival-going viewer of Iranian cinema may suspect that the emphasis is more contemplative than formal, more immanent than transcendental. (Paul Schrader defines, and David Bordwell dismisses, the transcendental qualities of work by Bresson, Dreyer, and Ozu.[23]) We are drawn into an experiential domain of immanence, where quotidian rhythms and manifestations of *taqiyah* (the concealment of one's true feelings), a heightened sense of duration, and an intensified call for inference-making approximate the ethnographic texture of work by Chantal Akerman, Jim Jarmusch, or Richard Linklatter more than the transcendental tone of Bresson and company.

The very frugality of representation and narration produces a sense of pattern, or meaning, but one not centered on characters and the individualism such centering would subtend. Pursuing an inferential logic, for example, examines consequences that seem revealed by the films' laconic structure rather than chosen by characters. What we identify with more than characters is diffusely experiential; it is closer to what Metz called "primary identification," except it is less concerned with the image per se and much more with the meaning-making process suspended between us, the viewers, and the succession of moving images. The result is to shift attention to a different plane of engagement, one that is more fully experiential than characterological, more transpersonal than individual, and more instructive—and pleasing—than entertaining.[24]

The endings of many of the films confirm this shift. We are moved into a position *near* the characters rather than *with* them. A displacement effect occurs, as in the conclusion to *Life and Nothing More*. A sense of release displaces a sense of narrative closure revolving around the completion of a quest by characters. The result is closer to the revelation of an alternative realm of being, or path, the confirmation of a transformative process that incorporates individuals but is less centered on them than on qualities immanent within their sphere of physical habitation. This type of closure has an inclusive effect, yoking the one—given to us as example or cipher—and the many, or the one and that which is of a different order entirely.

As festival-goers, though, our encounter now concludes. We have achieved a reading of recent Iranian films; pattern has emerged. It is predominantly formalist, weak in contextual background, susceptible to correction and debate. But these very qualities are what add new, global meanings to work that first took shape within a local arena. We have witnessed, and contributed to, the induction of Iranian cinema into the great trade routes of the international film festival and art cinema circuit. We have contributed to the attainment of international auteur status to film-makers like Abbas





The Peddler (above);
Nargess (left)

Kiarostami, Rakhshan Bani-Etemed, and Amir Naderi. We have confirmed our own membership in the community of international film festival-goers able to extract patterns where none initially existed, to recognized distinctive styles and infer social meaning.

A delicate balance between submergence in the experience of the new and the discovery of pattern confers an aura of familiarity that resonates as pleasure. This is a distinctive pleasure: it accompanies the discovery that the unknown is not entirely unknowable. As festival-goers we experience a precarious, ephemeral moment in which an imaginary coherence renders Iranian cinema no longer mysterious but still less than fully known. Like the tourist, we depart with the satisfaction of a partial knowledge, pleased that it is of our own making. Beyond it lie those complex forms of local knowledge that we have willingly exchanged for the opportunity to elect Iranian cinema to the ranks of the international art film circuit. Hovering, like a spectre, at the boundaries of the festival experience, are those deep structures and thick descriptions that might restore a sense of the particular and local to what we have now recruited to the realm of the global.

■ Bill Nichols's latest book, *Blurred Boundaries*, will be published this fall by Indiana University Press.

Notes

1. I wish to thank the organizers of the Toronto International Film Festival, particularly Dimitri Eipides and Susan Norget, who programmed the Iranian cinema retrospective in 1992, for their assistance in seeing films and interviewing directors. This article is only possible thanks to their considerable help.
2. This essay stands as a companion piece to "The International Film Festival and Global Cinema," *East-West Journal* 8, no. 1 (1994) which examines the function of international film festivals within a global traffic in film akin to the function of museums within a global traffic in cultural artifacts and fine art, using recent Iranian cinema as a reference point.
3. Cameron Bailey, David McIntosh, Geeta Sondi, "Perspective Canada," *Toronto International Film Festival of Festivals Catalogue* (Toronto: Festival of Festivals, 1992), p. 235.
4. Dimitri Eipides, "Iranian Cinema," *Toronto International Film Festival of Festivals Catalogue*, p. 277.
5. Peter Broderick, "Introduction," *The Back of Beyond: Discovering Australian Film and Television* (Sydney: Australian Film Commission, 1988), p. vii.
6. "Contemporary World Cinema," *Festival of Festivals Catalogue*, p. 87.
7. "The cinema is a body (a corpus for the semiologist), a fetish that can be loved." Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 57.
8. Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).
9. Geertz, "Deep Play," p. 452.
10. Geertz presents a dramatic account of the latter quality, his own sense of looking in, in the opening section of the essay. This constitutes an "arrival scene" that qualifies him to speak with authority: he was there, he knows. The element of personal investment and experience, however, drops out of the remainder of the essay, where Balinese culture crystallizes into more and more of an external, knowable thing. For further discussion of Geertz's narrative strategy in the essay, see Vincent Crapazano, "Hermes' Dilemma: The Masking of Subversion in Ethnographic Description," in James Clifford and George Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986).
11. E. Ann Kaplan, "Melodrama/Subjectivity/Ideology: Western Melodrama Theories and their Relevance to Recent Chinese Cinema," *East-West Journal* 5, no. 1 (January 1991), p. 7. I disagree with the "uncovering" concept, which seems somewhat ethnocentric (at least it overlooks the extent to which critics from the same culture may understand things that we, looking over their shoulder, fail to see at all), and prefer to argue that *additional* layers of meaning result from the circulation of artifacts and art works in a global economy.
    The Balinese cockfight was not designed to travel. New Iranian cinema is. What the critic from elsewhere adds, as a supplement, might also, in this light, be regarded as the finishing touch that completes a distinctive, complex fusion of the local and the global.
12. Ibid, p. 7.
13. I discuss two of the most common means of recovering strangeness as the familiar, analogy and allegory, in "Sexual Politics and National Liberation: Films From Vietnam," *UCLA Film and Television Archives Study Guide* (Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Film and Television Archives, 1992), pp. 7–15.
14. Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Schocken, 1976). Back region information approximates insider knowledge; it also approximates gossip, and, as such, is soundly criticized by Trinh T. Minh-ha in her polemic against the anthropological tradition of extracting information about the lives of others to provide the currency of exchange for anthropologists (*Woman/Native/Other* [Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989], pp. 67–68). As insider knowledge, back-region information, gained from press releases and conferences, after screening discussions and interviews, becomes the stock-in-trade of the critics and journalists whose writing helps proclaim the arrival of each new cinema. Like the anthropologists criticized by Trinh, they usually evince no awareness of the formulaic, ritualized, and self-serving aspects of the larger process to which they contribute.
15. Interview with Mohammad Attebai, Toronto International Film Festival, September 25, 1992. What he told me in more condensed form is comparable to what audiences glean from after-screening discussion with film-makers.
16. Fredric Jameson makes this argument in *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1991). While I find his account overgeneralized and dismissive of the multiple identities that individuals take up by means of "small group" (not specifically class-based) politics, the "we" described here corresponds closely to Jameson's postmodern subject.
17. Two excellent articles by Hamid Naficy that provide contextual information and valuable insight into Iranian cinema are "Islamizing Film Culture in Iran," in Samih K. Farsound and Mehrad Mashayekhi, eds., *Iran: Political Culture in the Islamic Republic* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 173–208, and "Women and the Semiotics of Veiling and Vision in Cinema," *The American Journal of Semiotics* 8, no. 1/2 (1991), pp. 46–64. In addition, see Antoine de Baecque, "Le Réel a tremblé," (review of *Life and Nothing More*) and de Baecque, "Entretien avec Abbas Kiarostami," both in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, no. 461 (November 1992).
18. A considerable number of recent works switch the sex of avenging characters to female, particularly in low-budget, lowbrow genre films like *Ms. 45*, *I Spit on Your Grave*, and *Ladies Club*. A few big-budget, higher-brow films have picked up the theme: *Thelma & Louise* and, with a somewhat anomalous faith in the judicial system, *The Accused*. The act of seeking revenge remains masculine in its gender coding but becomes distributed among women as well as men in such films. This shift is thoroughly discussed in Carol J. Clover, *Men, Women and Chainsaws* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992). Iranian cinema offers no parallel to this transformation.
19. In one memorable, but offhand, moment from *Life and Nothing More*, the protagonist's young son complains that his soda is warm and he does not want it. The father

suggests he pour it out the car window while they wait at a checkpoint. Beyond the window the side of another car is visible. From that car a woman we cannot see urges the boy not to waste the soda. Pour it in this cup, she says, and the boy complies. The entire sequence takes place in medium shots from the far side of the boy's car. The film goes on. We never see the woman.

20. Interview with the author, September 19, 1992, Festival of Festivals, Toronto, Canada.
21. The director, Mohsen Makmalbaf, was a militant activist against the Shah and was imprisoned for five years. He gained release in 1979, "at the dawn of the Islamic revolution," according to the press kit. He has published short stories and a novel, written several screenplays, and directed more than ten films. He was a founder of the Arts Bureau of the Center for the Propagation of Islamic Thought. The press kit's synopsis describes the three short stories in *The Peddler* as "related in their support of the religious notion of unchangeable predestination. In one episode, the Peddler is involved with a gang of smugglers. Though he knows he is about to be killed by the gang, the Peddler is proven helpless in his attempt to change his faith" [sic; perhaps a typo for "fate"?].

    The apparent unanimity of critical opinion is not complete. At least one reviewer, writing outside the conventions of a humanist discovery of commonality, saw a very different, far more intemperate message in Makmalbaf's film. In *The Georgia Straight* (Oct. 6–13, 1989), Shaffin Shariff asserts "Using Islam as its justification, *The Peddler* says that its main characters are worse than criminals, who have no illusions about their sins." Shariff continues, "It's blasphemy that the couple even tries to leave its newborn in a mosque, that the man [the hero of the second of the three stories] persists in maintaining his delusions, and that the peddler tries to bargain with the guilty [who plan to execute him]. A western audience is likely to see tragic flaws in [the characters], especially when some of the escapades appear ironic, even comic. But *The Peddler* is not an intentional comedy. It's a justification of an objectionable world view. . . . *The Peddler*'s point of view, once extrapolated, deserves unequivocal rejection."
22. David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).
23. Bordwell claims that inferences of a transcendental style are misreadings of formal patterns; other interpretations are equally possible; what underwrites them all are the modulation of cinematic parameters themselves. This dispute need not detain us since Iranian cinema does not match Bordwell's category, nor does it fulfill what Schrader claims is the correct form, and formula, for transcendental style in all cultures. See Paul Schrader, *Transcendental Style in Film: Ozu, Bresson, Dreyer* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1972) and David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film.*
24. The reference to Brecht's admiration of Horace's motto, to instruct and please, is intentional. I have no reason to suspect that this sample of Iranian cinema shares Brecht's political agenda. But, like Brecht's plays, these films do engage us at both a cognitive, instructive level and an aesthetic, pleasing one. Brecht's concept of the "alienation effect" strikes me, in this context, as a secular, or materialist version of the austerity practiced here. In both cases a sense of remove from the illusionist time and space of realism arises in much the same spirit as the formalist concept of *ostranenie* or defamiliarization. But the effect is to direct us not toward a realism of economic system and social structure, à la Brecht, nor a formalism of literariness or cinematicness, à la formalism, but to what I call here, for lack of a better word, immanence.

Filmography

Beyond the Fire (*Ansouy-e Atash*), Kainoush Ayyari, 1987, 97 min.
A man, turned in by his brother and sent to jail for assault, returns to claim his rightful share of disputed proceeds. (His brother sold the family home to Iran's national oil company, displacing his own mother and buying tawdry Western goods with the money.) In the midst of a desolate oil field, the two brothers continue their quarrel as plumes of burning gas constantly blast into the desert sky. The stakes are paltry but the sense of honor is intense. The cheated brother's attempt to propose to a local woman becomes complicated by the need to have his mother make the traditional request. At the conclusion the brothers and this young, mute woman all scuffle in the shadow of the burning gas, divided and desperate.

Close Up (*Nama-ye Nazdik*), Abbas Kiarostami, 1990, 100 min.
The unemployed Ali decides to impersonate the well-known Iranian film-maker Mohsen Makmalbaf (*The Peddler*). He ingratiates himself into the life of a wealthy family until his ruse falls apart. After he is arrested, the maker of this film, Kiarostami, comes on the scene to "document" the trial. The events leading up to Ali's arrest are reenacted, adding new levels of insight and irony to the story.

The Key (*Kelid*), Ebrahim Forouzesh, 1986, 76 min.
Almost the entire film traces the efforts by a series of adults to "rescue" a four-year-old child left home with his baby brother while his mother is out shopping. Shot in an observational style that stresses the quotidian nature of the child's adventures, suspense nonetheless mounts as the concerned adults imagine greater and greater disasters and become increasingly desperate in their efforts to avert a fate to which the child remains oblivious.

Life and Nothing More (*Zendigi va digar Hich*), Abbas Kiarostami, 1992, 91 min.
A father and son travel to northern Iran after a disastrous earthquake hits the region. The father sets out to discover the fate of the young boy who played the lead role in Kiarostami's *Where Is the Friend's Home?* Through a series of encounters, represented in a low-key and often oblique style, the father's journey brings him new insights and priorities.

Nargess, Rakhshan Bani-Etemed, 1991, 100 min.
The only film in this group made by a woman, *Nargess* details the complex interactions among Afagh, an older woman; Adel, whom she has raised to be her accomplice in petty crimes and her sexual companion; and the younger, entirely innocent Nargess, with whom Adel falls in love. Nargess's family accepts his marriage proposal (as Afagh plays Adel's mother), but soon Nargess must confront the double truth: Adel is both a thief and actually married to his (purported) mother. The film itself is doubly unusual: it addresses distinctly urban issues and does so primarily from the perspective of the two female characters.

The Need (*Niaz*), Alizera Davudnezhad, 1991, 81 min.
A young boy's father dies and he resolves to get a job to support his mother. Soon he is pitted against another young man for one job in a print shop. Ali, the protagonist, must decide how to conduct himself when he finds the odds unfairly stacked against him and his competitor, Reza, no less needy than himself.

The Peddler (*Dastforoush*, also *Dust-forough*), Mohsen Makmalbaf, 1987, 95 min.
The three short stories that comprise *The Peddler* involve: 1) a destitute couple who try to "abandon" their new baby daughter so that a better-off, caring person will adopt her. The child winds up cared for, but not in the way the parents intended; 2) a man who lives with and cares for his elderly mother. With strong overtones of *Psycho,* he slowly drifts toward madness; 3) a peddler caught in a maze of dream/nightmare/reality in which he becomes the target of fellow peddlers, who seem to believe he betrayed them and must now pay the price.

The Runner (*Davandeh*), Amir Naderi, 1985, 94 min.
The Runner was the first Iranian film to move onto the international film festival circuit, where it was compared to *Los Olvidados* and *Pixote*. Here there is no corruption or sexual overtone to a tale about abandoned children of the city. Amiro, the protagonist, smitten with images of planes, remains caught within cycles of poverty. The synopsis provided to the press captures the simplicity and poetry of this as well as most other Iranian films:

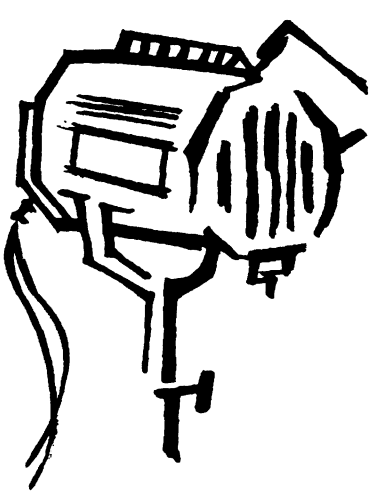
> Lonesome Amiro is overwhelmed by the dream of a journey to the unknown and an urge for victory. He lives in an abandoned ship, filling his time with casual jobs. Amiro is in a hurry to learn many things, as he wishes to know where the ships and planes are bound to go.
> As he learns the lessons in an evening school, he attains victory in a race with his peers.

Stony Lion (*Shir-e Sangi*), Massoud Jafari Jozani, 1987, 93 min.
A period film set during the time of British occupation, this is also a classic tale of divide-and-conquer rule and how it can exacerbate existing tension with tribal and clan relations. Kouhyawr, a shepherd, finds the dead body of a British engineer near a desert pipeline. British demands for punishment soon embroil two tribal clans, one led by a collaborator entranced with technology, the other by a traditionalist prepared to sacrifice life for honor. It is in the relatively minor roles of the wives and younger sons of these men that Jozani locates a sense of hope for an alternative future.

The Tenants (*Ejareh Neshinha*), Darioush Mehrjui, 1985, 130 min.
A madcap comedy that stands in sharp contrast to most of the other films. Mehrjui, like Howard Hawks in *Bringing Up Baby* or *Monkey Business*, inverts the values normally upheld. This tale of four families battling one another for control of a suburban apartment building turns honor, integrity, and sacrifice into greed, dishonesty, and manipulation. Elements of social satire pervade the film.

Water, Wind, Dust (*Ab, Bad, Khak*), Amir Naderi, 1985/89, 94 min.
Using the same actor as in *The Runner*, Naderi sets his protagonist off on a search for his family in a severely drought-stricken region of Iran. Determination and fortitude confront a relentlessly unforgiving nature. The sound of the wind, the sight of dust, and the absence of water dominate the film. As with *Life and Nothing More*, the hero's odyssey leads in unexpected directions, withholding the resolution we anticipate.

Where Is the Friend's Home? (*Khaneh-ye Doust Kojast?*), Abbas Kiarostami, 1987, 90 min.
A schoolboy, Ahmad, discovers that he has accidentally taken the work book of a classmate who is already in trouble for failing to do homework. In the face of parental indifference, Ahmad sets out to return the book. His quest becomes another journey of discovery even though he fails to find his classmate's home.



Kristin Handler

Sexing *The Crying Game*

Difference, Identity, Ethics

> [*The Crying Game* is] a love story. . . . It's about how two characters find a way to love each other who are divided by so many things. [. . .] It's also about how one person loses himself to find himself. The central character loses all the different facets of what he thought was his identity. Once he does that, he finds the human being in himself.
>
> Neil Jordan, director and screenwriter.[1]

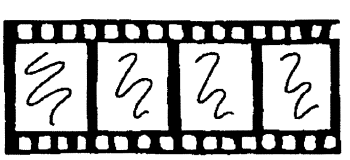
To what did Jordan's film *The Crying Game* owe its extraordinary success? Evidently the sheer fact of the film's vigorously promoted and initially well-kept secret drew crowds of the merely curious, but how were audiences affected once they were let in on it? Why did the film "work"—and get rewarded for its efforts by good box-office attendance, an Oscar, and general critical approval? Appending the missing part of Jordan's censored description (from an early interview) of the film's central predicament, we might well ask whether the story of a man who becomes humanized by a romantic relationship with another man who appears to be, and identifies as, a woman does not present a real challenge to normative convictions about the nature of sexual identity and preference. The film's success seems all the more remarkable for having coincided with the height of the furor over whether openly gay men and woman should be allowed to serve in the U.S. military, a debate which resulted in the airing of expressions of (sometimes violent) homophobia in the national media. We can begin to answer these questions by suggesting that the film attempts to remove difference from the realm of moral judgment by promoting a familiar and romantic brand of humanism.

The political-thriller plot (the kidnapping of a black British soldier by the I.R.A.) that inaugurates *The Crying Game* establishes a situation of maximum polarization. The film piles up binary oppositions in multiple registers with dizzying speed—male/female,

(left) Miranda Richardson as Jude; (previous page) Jaye Davidson as Dil and Stephen Rea as Fergus

black/white, Irish/British, and of course, cricket/hurling—then metamorphoses into an erotic thriller, the better to show that love and understanding can prevail over these deep, hierarchically organized divisions. It's crucial that this ideal gets fleshed out by a love story; the secret of Dil's sex forms the crux of the film's larger, structural, bait-and-switch: nationalism and racial difference become pretext and backdrop for a drama of sex, identity, and desire. The film could thus be said to substitute a "libidinal politics" for racial and national politics.[2] But even granting that the film isn't ultimately very interested in politics as such, it is also equivocal on the relationship of its humanism to sexuality, identity, and difference. The film borrows from Orson Welles' *Mr. Arkadin* the parable of the scorpion and the frog, which Jody relates to Fergus near the beginning of the film, and Fergus then tells to Dil at the end. This story condenses *The Crying Game*'s message and moral impulse: the only difference that matters is the difference between frogs and scorpions—between those who give and those who take. But the film as a whole unwittingly reproduces the confusion inherent in the parable: paradoxically, though the telling of the story dramatizes a moment of choice between two ethical attitudes, "frog" and "scorpion" also seem to represent essential human identities (the scorpion can't help being destructive, the frog can't help being kind, because it's in their natures).

I will argue that because it takes inadequate account of the way difference has been and is always available as an occasion and an excuse for the inscription of power, the film ends up displacing the hierarchical relations that obtain between men and reinscribing them in the realm of sexual difference. What can be taken to be the film's genuinely anti-homophobic gesture is therefore purchased at an unacceptable price. Jordan's own account of *The Crying Game*'s humanism intimates the inadequacy of its realization: the film dramatized only *Fergus*'s accession to full humanity. In terms of the parable's ambiguous meaning, Fergus becomes an amphibious ("of a mixed or two-fold nature"; from the Greek, "living a double life") ethical being while the other characters become representatives of essential "natures" based on precisely those differences the film allegedly wants to overcome. *The Crying Game* unself-consciously essentializes sexual and racial difference to fix the identities of Jody, Jude, and Dil, in order to free Fergus to be all that he can be.



> Letting gays into a hard-charging military unit like the [Marine] Corps isn't the same as in the old days, when blacks and women were let in. What we're talking about now is not equality but people who are different in a way that's totally wrong.
>
> Quoted in *The New York Times*, January 28, 1993.[3]

The Crying Game's treatment of homosexuality and homophobia comes closest to realizing its impulse to overcome difference. Although the film splits into two sharply differentiated parts, the change of theme from racial and national politics to libidinal politics is only apparent, since the homoeroticism of the bond between Fergus and Jody is of paramount importance from the start. The second part of the film works through the trauma of the short, violent "Irish" segment, in which Fergus's guard/prisoner relationship with Jody evolves from stark national and racial polarization to mutual articulation of the differences of race and nation, a process which permits the men to become united by a bond of deep sympathy before their relationship is brutally severed by Jody's death. The rest of the film develops the presumptively heterosexual, then potentially homosexual relationship between Fergus and Dil, a relationship in which the issues of race and nation seem to have become irrelevant, displaced onto a question of sex.

By luring us into desiring what is supposed to seem like a heterosexual love story while never ceasing to signal the fundamentally homoerotic component of Fergus's desire for Dil, the film forces us, with Fergus, to confront the continuity between male bonding ("normal," valorized by patriarchal culture, especially in the military) and male homosexuality (stigmatized, feared, repudiated).[4] This culture strenuously insists on the absence of sexual desire in relationships between heterosexual men, and demands that men homophobically police themselves and each other for signs of incipient homosexuality. The debate over whether the military would allow its members to be openly gay provided only particularly blatant, and tragic, examples of the projective violence through which the repudiation of homosexuality is effected: the media coupled coverage of homophobic hate crimes, including murder, with accounts of macho soldiers' paranoid fantasies of sexually predatory gay men.[5] It is not surprising, then, that in *The Crying Game* the desublimation of homoeroticism and the decomposition of Fergus's initially tough, aggressive masculinity go hand in hand. While ultimately, and importantly, Fergus does not explicitly experience homosexual desire, the film wants to show that he is a better man for overcoming violent homophobia. For Fergus to "lose himself" entails losing the armored, delusorily phallic ego of normative masculinity, thereby becoming lacking, feminized.[6] As we will see, the problem feminization presents for Fergus's identity is ultimately solved by the film in a dubious manner. Nonetheless, *The Crying Game* valorizes a self-abnegating masculinity that can embrace what normative masculinity would seem most to abhor: the female-identified gay man.

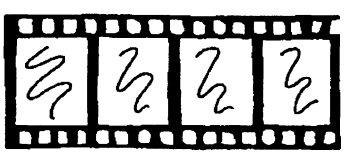
The detumescence of Fergus's conventionally masculine identity begins in the first part of the film as he, reluctantly, forms a markedly homoerotic bond with his prisoner. Though he's never without his gun, Fergus's empathic response to Jody forbids him to use it as would the "tough undeluded motherfucker," the representation Jody makes of Fergus's "nature" as an Irish nationalist. "What the fuck do you know about my *nature*?!" Fergus retorts, and in fact Fergus refuses to dehumanize and brutalize Jody as the other I.R.A. members do. The turning point in their relationship occurs when Jody, whose hands are tied behind him, calls upon Fergus's good nature to help him urinate. Instead of refusing, Fergus reluctantly handles Jody's penis, and (as Jude does in the opening seduction scene) holds Jody's hands to assist him. Jody teases Fergus about his squeamishness: "For Christ's sake, man, it's only a piece of meat! It's got no major diseases!" The tension between them eases when Fergus participates in Jody's lighthearted treatment of the situation's overtones. Jody's sympathy with Fergus's discomfort—"It wasn't easy for you" ("as a straight man," we can add retrospectively)—relaxes Fergus's defenses: he bursts out laughing, "The pleasure was all mine!" "No, it was mine," Jody replies. Their shared joke makes a pleasure, if not a virtue, of necessity: their laughter promptly puts Fergus in conflict with the film's most aggressive male character, Peter, the I.R.A. leader.

The bond between Fergus and Jody becomes further solidified into what seems like a classic homosocial triangle through the exchange of Dil's picture: the "woman" becomes the point of covergence for the men's desire.[7] Jody passes Dil along to Fergus for safekeeping, but instead Dil becomes the agent of Fergus's further diminution as a securely heterosexual man. In the "British" part of the film, far from mastering his homoerotic feelings by successfully sublimating them in heterosexuality, and mastering the trauma of Jody's death by assuming Jody's position vis-à-vis Jody's "woman," Fergus has to confront the fact that he has been loving and desiring a man without knowing it. Further, Fergus's obsession with Jody drives his pursuit of Dil: he constantly asks Dil, "What about your man?"; "Tell me about him?"; "Did he come here [the Metro] too?"; "Did he dance with you?"; "Did he ever tell you you were beautiful?" After he finds out Dil has a dick: "Did he know?" "*Absolutely*," Dil replies. As if his insistent questions were insufficient indication of the homoerotic nature of Fergus's unconscious desire,

his recurrent dreams of Jody bowling punctuate the progress of his romance with Dil. The first dream occurs after he meets Dil; the last, of Jody tossing the cricket ball with a satisfied look on his face, occurs after the revelation of Dil's secret; but, most extraordinarily, Fergus has his second vision of Jody in a waking state—*while* Dil appears to be giving him a blow job. After we see the convulsion of pleasure in his face, there is a cut to the picture the film will keep returning to, of Jody in his cricket uniform. "What would he think?" are the first words out of Fergus's mouth. Finally, under the necessity of protecting her from the I.R.A., Fergus eventually turns Dil *into* Jody, by cutting her hair, dressing her in the very cricket outfit of his dreams, and then taking her to a hotel for a "honeymoon." So that he won't have to tell her the truth, Fergus leads Dil to believe it's all because he really prefers her as a man. Dil treats as seduction what Fergus thinks he is doing merely to protect her, but the question of whether Fergus is *only* faking desire for her is begged by Dil's exclamation, "You want to make me like him!" i.e., Jody—the original object of Fergus's desire.

The Crying Game works very hard to put the viewer in Fergus's place by investing us in what looks like a heterosexual love story, at the same time that it continually invokes Jody's presence to triangulate the relationship. To the extent that we miss these cues by believing that Dil is a desirable woman, we are forced to participate, with Fergus, in the confrontation of the homoerotic/homosocial with the homosexual. The secret is therefore much more than a mere gimmick, even though it proved to be the film's most effective marketing device.[8] The secret's revelation confronts the viewer with a homophobically unthinkable proposition—let it be represented by the castrato La Zambinella's proposition to the eponymous protagonist of Balzac's short story "Sarrasine," a man in love with what he believes is the perfect woman: "And if I were not a woman?" The question is no longer hypothetical after we've seen Dil's dick and discovered sexual similitude where we thought we were seeing sexual difference. Reaching beyond the moment of revelation and (gut-level) homophobic reaction, *The Crying Game* solicits the viewer's desire to continue an identificatory relationship with the romance between Fergus and Dil, thus asking us to partake in the process by which Fergus tries to get over homophobia.

Fergus and Jody are meant to be deeply sympathetic characters because they are both "gentlemen," as Dil puts it: that is, they are both gentle men, and what the film most values in them is their capacity for tenderness and empathy (though the conspicuous absence of these qualities in Jody's character when he's attempting to get sex from Jude in the opening scene anticipates my arguments about the film's treatment of women). Fergus gains a benign masculine identity insofar as he becomes like Jody: he knows about Dil and is able to love her as she is. Fergus's behavior bears out Jody's final assessments of Fergus's nature—"You're a kind person"; "You're my friend," Jody tells him. We must note, however, that although Dil persists to the end in casting Fergus as the man she loves, Fergus resists as assiduously the possibility of a sexual relationship with Dil after it's revealed that she's not the *woman* of his dreams. Fergus's sacrifice puts him safely behind bars, beyond the imminent possibility of sexual consummation. And so the question remains: To what extent is the "human being" in Fergus still defined by and confined to heterosexual masculinity?



> This was more than a woman, this was a masterpiece! In this unhoped-for creation could be found love to enrapture any man, and beauties worthy of satisfying a critic.
>
> "Sarrasine"

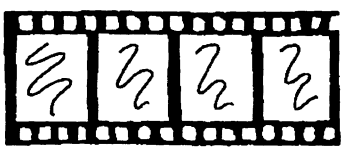
From the melancholy grandeur of "When a Man Loves a Woman," which affectively saturates Percy Sledge's revelation that when a man loves a woman he becomes a dupe and a masochist, to the campy genderfuck of "Stand by Your Man" as styled by Lyle Lovett, *The Crying Game*'s liminal moments provoke the questions "When a man loves a . . . *what*, exactly?" and "Who's the man?" The music underscores the film's deepest concerns: the film attempts to recuperate a masculine identity for Fergus by desublimating the homoerotic. However, the way in which the film constitutes this new masculine identity is problematic: Fergus's self-divestiture alters the content of masculine gender identity without challenging the binary and hierarchical structure of sexual difference that gender makes legible.

In order to understand *The Crying Game*'s "libidinal politics," sex, sexual difference, and gender must be understood to have distinct but interrelated mean-

ings.[9] For the purposes of this argument, *sex* refers to anatomy—to the reproductive organs of human beings, conventionally categorized as either male or female.[10] I am using the term *sexual difference* to describe a strictly ideological difference: the binary and hierarchical categorization of human beings as men and women, according to whether or not the body in question has or "lacks" a penis. By virtue of having penises, men can see themselves and are seen by others as whole, autonomous, and potent social agents, whereas women's supposed anatomical lack inscribes them as deficient, inadequate, socially inferior.[11] *Gender* (roles, traits) organizes the way sexual difference is lived socially and psychically through specific identities and characteristics marked as male or female. We might add that the meaning of *sexual preference*—the binary pair heterosexual/homosexual—obviously depends upon and reinforces the binary structure of sexual difference.

This set of definitions allows us to see that *The Crying Game*'s gender-bending fails to break the grip of sexual difference upon dominant notions of subjectivity. Fergus's experience challenges gender, not sexual difference: his transformation dramatizes a crisis in, but ultimately an enrichment of, *male* subjectivity. Fergus absorbs feminine gender attributes into his identity through the desublimation of homoeroticism, but the film doesn't want him to become too feminized: the film's refusal to slip from the homoerotic into the homosexual enjoins the border-policing function of heterosexuality, which naturalizes and reinforces sexual difference. But more decisively, Fergus's "nature" comes to be defined against the "natures" of Dil, Jude, and Jody. *The Crying Game* draws on the cultural repertoire of racial and gender stereotypes to redistribute gender tropes, so that the bodies marked as *either* sexually *or* racially different from Fergus's become hyperbolically feminized. The female term in the binary has to be fixed in order for the male term to become fluid *and still remain recognizably masculine.*

We might first consider, then, the degree to which *women*, both as agents and as victims, are erased by cultural representations (and, for that matter, theoretical accounts) which prioritize male feminization as the means of subverting phallic masculinity. Tania Modleski has argued that both "gender studies" criticism and popular films amply demonstrate "how frequently male subjectivity works to appropriate 'femininity' while oppressing women," with the result of consolidating male power.[12] This argument has significant purchase on *The Crying Game*, which fails to question the hierarchical arrangement of sexual difference or the oppression of women by men, and is not at all interested in female subjectivity. On the contrary, the sole woman, Jude, is as her name suggests a Judas figure, and winds up a dead *femme fatale*. And though one might argue that Dil lives a female identity—and I will refer to the character as "she"—Dil challenges the relation of the sexed body to sexual difference (she asserts she *is* a "girl") without disturbing either the structure of sexual difference (there are men and women, she just happens to inhabit the wrong body) *or* the dominant configurations of gender (her feminine identity is highly conventional). Together Dil and Jude perform the limited range of simultaneously excessive and deficient—that is, normative—femininity.



Sometimes it's hard to be a woman . . .
"Stand by Your Man"

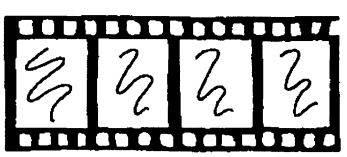
How *do* we see Dil after we see her dick? I have said we see sexual similitude where we expect to see sexual difference, but it would be more accurate to say that we see a person with a penis: Dil always refers to herself as "she" and "a girl": "A girl has her feelings," she says to Fergus. "You're not a girl." "Details, baby, details," she replies. The representation of her character prompts the question, "Can a man *be* a woman at the level of the psyche?"[13] The claim that drag is a subversive political act, a performance of gender that shows gender to be performative, has had much currency in the last few years. whether it's staked by academic theorists or stated far more succinctly by celebrity practitioner RuPaul, the 6' 7" black drag queen whose song "Supermodel" hit the top 40 dance charts when *The Crying Game* was a box-office success: "Every time I bat my eyelashes, it's a political act."[14] *The Crying Game* represents male-to-female cross-dressing quite differently than do the champions of drag as political theater, in a way that reveals not only the arbitrary relations of both gender and sexual difference to the sexed body, but also the fundamental relation of gender and sexual difference to the psyche. For Dil to identify, rather than to masquerade, as a woman implicitly affirms the grip of sexual difference on *subjectivity*, even while the relationship of sexual difference to the *body* is denaturalized.

Biologically, if we can believe our eyes, Dil is a man; thus we could say that Dil, who desires other men, is gay. But Dil identifies and desires as a *heterosexual* woman. Once it's clear the Dil can only "be" a woman at the level of fantasy and desire, the "gay man" and the "woman" Dil simultaneously comes to represent are united by a shared condition of deviance from the male norm. As my discussion of race will indicate, not all men can lay claim to the phallus by virtue of having a penis; our definition of sexual difference might further be refined by the suggestion that the distinction sexual difference makes is not so much between men and women but between men and "not-men," the "non-male" category being marked by femininity-as-lack. Thus, *The Crying Game re*naturalizes sexual difference thorough recourse to an amalgam of all-too-familiar feminine stereotypes.

The problem that Dil's character presents for the film's representational system becomes acute in *The Crying Game's* climactic sequence, where the representation of Dil as pathologically homosexual and feminine, and therefore as the site of an unpleasurable lack, is in tension with the film's demand that we—and Fergus—empathize with her pain. The sequence begins when Dil, drunk and furious, appears out of the darkness in the white cricket uniform Jody wears in Fergus's dreams. In the ensuing scenes, the accretion of stereotypical tropes around Dil's character becomes quite marked: far from being the cool, alluring, and self-possessed woman she once seemed to be, Dil's identity becomes inflected, or infected, by figures of pathological femininity: the pathetic queen, the hysterical, clingy, self-destructive woman. In place of the penis adequate to the phallus, she displays at this point the multiple lack of her homosexual/transgendered/feminine identity.

At the same time, the film enlists our sympathy for Dil's rather histrionic performance: drinking and downing pills, she storms, weeps, faints, begs Fergus not to go. The morning after, Dil realizes that while she was drunk and drugged, Fergus told her he was responsible for Jody's death. She ties Fergus to the bed, ineffectually threatens to kill him, then collapses into his arms. Their dialogue reaches an emotional peak when Dil extorts Fergus's vows of love at gunpoint: "You like me now, Jimmy? [Fergus's alias in England]" "I like you, Dil." Still sardonic: "Give me a bit more, baby, a bit more." . . . "Tell me you love me." . . . "Love you, Dil." The scene resonates with the transformation of Fergus's coerced speech into a genuine response to Dil's demand for love and to his own feelings for her. "What would you do for me?" "Anything." She begins to break down. "Say it again." "I'd do anything for you, Dil," and as he utters them the words become utterly sincere, as he will prove by doing time for Dil. She frees his arm and puts it around her: "You'll never leave me?" "Never." "I know you're lying, Jimmy, but it's nice to hear it." The weight of Dil's desolation and of his responsibility for it hits Fergus with all the force of a love baffled but not destroyed by Dil's anatomical unfitness for this no-longer heterosexual relationship. He embraces her and begins to cry. "I'm sorry, Dil," he whispers. Enter Jude.

In the end, Dil blows Jude, not Fergus, away, as she realizes Jody's betrayal: "You was there, wasn't you? You used those tits and that ass to get him, didn't you!" Dil slips back into stereotype again—hear the "inadequate queen's" shrill resentment of the "real" woman—to the point of camp when she screams, "Tell me what she wore!" at Fergus.[15] But Dil's demand demands an answer if we are to understand the relationship between the two versions of femininity modeled by the two "women."



> I knew in the first scene [that Dil is played by a male actor] but I couldn't believe that that was the big surprise everybody was talking about. It's no surprise to *me* that a girl has a dick. So I kept waiting for the big twist. I thought Miranda Richardson was going to reveal that she had a dick, too. I mean, *there's* a surprise for you.
>
> Charles Busch, "peerless New York-based writer and drag actor behind *Vampire Lesbians of Sodom*."[16]

Busch's comic speculation about Richardson's anatomy spotlights the metaphoric significance of Jude's role in *The Crying Game*: Jude doesn't have to have a dick, she *is* a dick. When Dil metamorphoses into one kind of feminine stereotype, her character continues to demand a sympathetic reading; Jude, in contrast, has an entirely antipathetic part to play from the start. After Jody tells the parable of the scorpion and the frog, and persuades Fergus to be merciful and take off the hood—"because you're kind, it's in your nature"—Jude comes into the greenhouse and insists that Jody be hooded again. When he protests, she smashes

his face with the butt of the gun. "Women are trouble," Jody says, trembling and bleeding. "Do you know that?" "No," says Fergus. "Some kinds of women are." "She can't help it," Fergus replies. "It's in her nature," we might as well add, since he unconsciously repeats and reinforces the essentializing meaning of Jody's division of humanity into "those that give and those that take." Dil, on the other hand, is "no trouble at all": "I'm thinking of her now—you think of her too." It's not accidental that the sole woman in the film becomes the representative scorpion and that the untroublesome kind of woman turns out not to be one after all. If the film wants to divest its male characters of the phallus so that they can be human beings, it seems determined to relocate phallic masculinity at one of the culture's most overcrowded sites: the image of the *femme fatale*, the phallic woman. While I would not go so far as to say that "frog" and "scorpion" really mean "male" and "female" by the end of the film (largely because Dil continues to insist on her "feminine" identity), the fact is that the frog-identity becomes attached to feminized men while the scorpion emblematizes another arachnoid identity for the phallic woman, who has been more commonly described as Black Widow, Spider-Woman, Deadlier Than the Male.

The film's two sharply demarcated parts map out the process and purpose of Jude's demonization. Here, the answer to Dil's question, "Tell me what she wore!" takes on great significance. When the film begins, Jude looks like a woman trying to look girlishly "sexy": to pick up Jody, she wears, somewhat awkwardly, a tarty, lower-class version of the uniform of conventional femininity—short skirt, high heels, make-up, jewelry, coifed hair. Her appearance after Jody's capture reveals this outfit to be a costume. For the remainder of the "Irish" part of the film she is conspicuously and emphatically deglamorized: unkempt hair, shapeless clothing, flat boots, no make-up, no jewelry, no nonsense. This look isn't any more "natural" than the first, but it appears to be so because Jude is no longer wearing her gender as a sexual lure. Far from being the phallic female terrorist she is in London, here she seems subordinate to the men: at several points she's told by Peter, who is clearly the leader of the group, to make tea and shut up. Even Fergus, who the film rather off-handedly indicates is Jude's lover, interrogates her about her sexual transactions with Jody while shining a flashlight into her face. Though neither particularly developed nor very sympathetic, Jude's character initially has a degree of plausibility that she completely

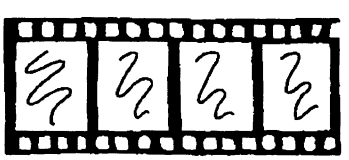
Jude as
femme fatale

loses in the second part of *The Crying Game.* Undisguised in Ireland, she does not bear the burden of hyperbolically representing Woman as Bitch, a burden massively laid on her by the rest of the film.

Whereas Fergus undergoes a humanizing diminution and feminization in London, Jude has acquired an inhumanly lacquered glamour. The visual tropes of film noir so thoroughly permeate the scene in which she materializes in Fergus's apartment that I assume Jordan is playing her transformation partly as a joke: dim blue light streams through venetian blinds but keeps in shadow the corner where Jude, arrayed in a helmet of shiny hair, tailored suit, and mask-like makeup, waits to trap the hapless Fergus. "I needed a tougher look," she says to her victim. Jude makes terrorism the scene of sexual seduction, in the style of the classic *femme fatale* whose murderousness is supposed to be the secret of her charm for the masochistic male, but Fergus doesn't respond well to her aggressive proposition ("Fuck me, Fergie," as she grabs his crotch). No matter, she's there on business—to force Fergus to undertake a suicide mission. When Fergus starts yelling at her to keep Dil out of it, Jude sneers at him, "Jesus, you're a walking cliché," and pulls a gun on him. She gives him the Judas kiss as she holds the gun to his head, then glides out of the room followed by her shadow, in exemplary noir style. "Keep the faith," she says.

The extreme change in register of Jude's character from minimally plausible I.R.A. terrorist to murderous phallic woman expresses *The Crying Game*'s fantasy of Fergus's former lover after he has rejected her and her cause for the homoerotic, a fantasy which enforces sexual difference in such a way as to deny to Jude the humanity with which the film works to invest Fergus. Further, by becoming the phallic woman, Jude (who shares the name of the patron saint of lost causes) becomes the dumping ground for the rejected masculine identity that required Fergus to be hard, brutal, in the service of his country. Jude assumes the role of the terrorist in exaggerated and monstrous form, monstrous because her aggressivity is so inordinately gendered and sexualized. If, as in the first part of the film, Jude continued to represent a particular woman trying to emulate for the sake of her country's independence the warrior-ideal of the soldier-terrorist—an ideal the film repudiates as a species of toxic masculinity which enables people to torture and kill others in the name of freedom—the death of her character might have indicated that women can but should not, in the name of sexual equality, assume the same sadistic and delusorily "phallic" ego available to some men. Instead, Jude's transformation makes her represent first and foremost a fantasy of phallic womanhood, and her death at the hands of the "woman" with a penis places her terminally beyond the pale of *The Crying Game*'s vision of humanity.

At the most perverse moment of *The Crying Game*'s climax, Fergus lies tied to the bed between a castrating Scylla and a hysterically engulfing Charybdis, both of whose costumes—Jude's highly stylized and strangely askew *femme fatale* look, Dil's bad haircut and ill-fitting men's clothes—seem to outfit them for a drag, or horror, show of femininity. In the strait between them lies the narrow way to the salvation of masculinity. Jude and Dil function as complementary avatars of undesirable feminine identities, against which the human being within Fergus emerges as unambiguously masculine. By assigning "good" feminine attributes to Fergus, the film revises and reconstructs his male gender identity (Fergus's two doubles, the I.R.A. leader Peter and "Fuck Off!" Dave, Dil's *other* deluded suitor, respectively represent fatally and comically unreconstructed masculinity), while segregating Fergus from the implication of femininity in pathology and lack. In the end, Fergus and Jude are separated by sex and sexual difference; Fergus and Dil by gender stereotypes read through race, as we will see.



. . . the black is not a man.

Frantz Fanon[17]

Why are Jody and Dil black? Jody and Fergus's conversation in the first part of the film stresses their different racial identities. When Fergus asks Jody what he's doing in Northern Ireland, Jody speaks of his experience of Irish racism: "So I get sent to the only place in the world where they call you nigger to your face. [Imitating Irish accent] 'Go back to your banana tree, nigger!' No use telling them I came from Tottenham." "You shouldn't take it personally," is Fergus's rather offhand response, to which perhaps, we could add: "Because your race is primarily understood and hated as a sign of your participation in the British occupation." (One interview with Neil Jordan noted that black British soldiers were the first people of color most Irish had ever seen.[18]) But *The Crying Game* freights Jody's blackness with connotations far in excess of denoting that current British colonial occupa-

Forest Whitaker as Jody (left) and Stephen Rea

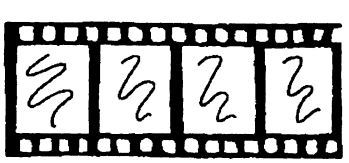
tion of Northern Ireland is enforced by the West Indian subjects of the former British Empire (during the conversation Jody indicates that he emigrated from Antigua). In the "Irish" segment, the film wants racial difference to signify a boundary transgressed between men who "find the human being" in each other in spite of the hierarchically organized differences which initially prevent them from recognizing each other's humanity. The reversal that occurs when Fergus goes across the water to "lose himself," as he puts it, suggests that Jody and Fergus in fact occupy analogous, though not identical, positions as England's colonial and racial others. When Fergus resurfaces in England as a day laborer, his Sloane-type employer, Deveroux, and the cockney foreman treat him as Pat-the-lazy-Irishman, and therefore as the object of their undisguised contempt: "Jim, Pat, Mick, what the fuck. Long as you remember you're not at Lords," Deveroux says when he sees Fergus imitating the motions of the cricket players on the field below. Just as Jody discovers that Ireland is the only place where "they call you nigger to your face," Fergus finds that to the upper- and lower-class Englishman alike, he's—what the Irish have been called since Carlyle—a white nigger.

If *The Crying Game* were not ultimately preoccupied with gender and sexual difference, the story of mutual recognition across the divide in Northern Ireland could be told in terms of national difference alone.[19] The racial difference between Jody and Fergus functions as a difference in excess of national difference by being *visible in their bodies*. As I have argued, in the first part of the film the bond between the men is thoroughly homoerotic, but Jody's and Fergus's sexual and gender identity are meant to be legible as heterosexual and male. Gender and sexual identity become destabilized in the second part of the film through the unveiling of Dil's penis, but the difference between Fergus's and Dil's racial identities seems, at least on the surface, to be irrelevant. But because we have to reread Jody's character, Jody's relationship to Dil, *and* Fergus's homoerotic bond with Jody through Dil's visibly, sexually similar body, I would argue that Jody's *and* Dil's shared racial identity encodes their "different" sexuality: Jody's hidden sexual identity, which is not marked on his body, becomes openly displayed as Dil's penis.

Here the film may be construed as unconsciously invoking the racist trope Frantz Fanon describes in *Black Skins, White Masks*, the trope which makes "Black" hyperbolically represent "body" and "sex": "The Negro symbolizes the biological."[20] Or, to paraphrase the sociologist Roger Bastide, once again, the

question "race" provokes the answer "sex."[21] Sex and sexual difference: *The Crying Game*'s big surprise, its "gimmick," is the unexpected sight of a black penis on the site of apparent femininity. Fanon again, on the European *imago* of the black: " . . . one is no longer aware of the Negro but only of a penis; the Negro is eclipsed. He is turned into a penis. He *is* a penis.[22] Like the woman, the black man's different *body* could be said to pose a castrative threat to the white man, but like her, the social order poses him as already castrated.[23] The "black rapist" fantasy, for example, imagines black male potency purely in the realm of animality; black masculinity is thereby deprived of the symbolic and cultural privilege the phallus represents.[24] The black man is marked by lack of having a "different" body, a body fantasized as having a penis that can never be the phallus; thus, paradoxically, *the penis itself* signifies the black man's feminization.

Of course, *The Crying Game* asks us to value Jody and Dil's non-phallic masculinity, not to see them as monstrous penises: their characters are scarcely written and acted as the crude racist stereotypes Fanon discusses. Yet the film's treatment of racial difference remains disturbing. It's not just that the penises of black men represent "not having the phallus"; it's that race is no longer problematized as an explicit issue and simply drops out of the film once it has done a certain kind of representational work, which suggests that the film wants to inflect its discourse with that trope without acknowledging its racism. *The Crying Game* blunts its humanist impulse by calling on the representation of black men as deviant, as body, as lacking, to effect the further segregation of Fergus's sovereign subjectivity (of all the characters, he alone *chooses* his fate) from feminization. Jody, Dil, and Fergus are supposed to be united by a shared condition of feminization; but while the film reveals Dil's anatomical similitude to Fergus, it doesn't problematize the fact that Dil's body, marked by "non-white" hair and skin, reads as "black," as *more* similar to Jody's body than to Fergus's. By ceasing to interrogate race once sex has replaced it as a symbol of difference, the film offers Fergus, and through him, the white (not necessarily male) spectator/director, the ability to remain one body away from identification with the feminization Jody and Dil "naturally," that is, culturally, represent by being both black *and* gay.



Jody: Tell me something. [. . .]
Fergus: (*pauses, and recites slowly*) When I was a child, I thought as a child. But when I became a man I put away childish things.
Jody: What does that mean?
Fergus: (*pauses again*) Nothing.
Jody: (*bewildered, desperate*) Nothing? [. . .] Not a lot of use—are you, Fergus.
Fergus: Me? No . . . I'm not good for much.

It seems worth reiterating that *The Crying Game* presents a genuine, if limited, challenge to homophobia. By enlisting spectatorial identification with the more human and humane masculinity Jody and Fergus come to embody, the film addresses an unusually progressive message to us at the level of fantasy, identity, and desire. A libidinal politics which attempts to remake subjectivity in this way is necessary when the grip of bigotry on the imagination is—as the official "resolution" of the debate (which nonetheless continues) over the presence of gays in the military indicates—as profound as ever. However, the film's power as an instrument of moral suasion is debilitated by its reconstruction of white heterosexual male subjectivity, or humanity, in opposition to the other characters, who are required to represent essentially feminine identities. We might then return to the question of the film's success, and conclude that it provides for the comfort of the ideologically normative spectator (with whose interests all of us are supposed to identify) far more than might at first be apparent.

The contradictions in *The Crying Game*'s politics also return us to the film's only partial self-awareness about the meaning of its central parable. On one hand, the frog and the scorpion seem to represent essential human natures; on the other, the repetition of the story functions in the film's larger narrative to suggest that storytelling constitutes an intersubjective act in which people offer meaning to each other and affirm the possibility of *changing* human nature. Jody's story humanizes Fergus by modeling kindness as a self-sacrificing ethical attitude preferable to irrational self-destructive violence. That Fergus tells the story to Dil to explain why he's doing time for her indicates that, just as he has assumed Jody's political position as a prisoner of the enemy nation, so has he accepted Jody's moral position by *choosing* to be a frog.

The scene that illuminates both the power of storytelling and its limits as a response to the political and social context of *The Crying Game* occurs after Fergus asks to guard Jody during the night before Fergus is to execute him. The scene begins with Jody's

anguished cries upon learning his fate. "Help me," he whispers, "Give me a cigarette." Fergus silently lights one for him and puts it in his mouth. This extraordinarily painful scene juxtaposes the terrifying image of Jody's mouth choking, speaking, under the black hood as he struggles with the knowledge of his imminent death. The hood frames the vulnerable mouth as grotesque, almost dehumanized flesh, but from that mouth comes a demand for meaning: "Tell me something. A story." Their subsequent conversation is quoted above: Fergus recites a verse from the famous passage on love in the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians ("In a word there are three things that last forever: faith, hope and love; but the greatest of them all is love").

Fergus fails Jody by being unable to communicate the meaning of the passage; but his failure emblematizes and follows from *The Crying Game*'s failure to convince us that love is the answer. Like *The Crying Game* itself, which dodges the political issues it raises in its rush to issues of sex and gender and which puts Jody's parable in the place of a substantive treatment of the armed conflict in Northern Ireland, Fergus can't give a meaning to Jody that would be adequate to his impending death at Fergus's hands. The possibility of acknowledging difference without repudiating commonality demands faith in an unessen-tialized universal humanity not prescribed by the hierarchically organized categories of gender, race, nation, etc. Because the film devotes insufficient attention to the particular ways identities are implicated in relations of domination and because it attempts to essentialize difference in the characters of Jody, Dil, and Jude, *The Crying Game* keeps that faith only with Fergus.

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Notes

Many thanks to Madeleine Fogarty for her helpful comments about race in *The Crying Game;* to Helene Moglen, for an incisive reading of an early version of the paper; to Greg Forter, who recognized what I meant to say; and to Seth Moglen, for his critical acuity and abiding faith.

1. Quoted in Bernard Weinraub, "'The Crying Game': Healing Powers From Making a Successful Movie," *The New York Times*, January 1, 1993, pp. 1(B) and 6(B).
2. I am borrowing the term "libidinal politics" from Kaja Silverman's *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York: Routledge, 1992), which asserts the political importance of recognizing and changing the way human subjectivity is founded in the ideology of sexual difference: she writes, "We need to begin thinking seriously about the political implications of desire and identification" (p. 296). I will be drawing substantially on the psychoanalytic framework offered by Silverman.
3. Statement by Corporal Daniel Brown, quoted in B. Drummond Ayres Jr., "Even the Thought Is Off-Limits," *The New York Times*, January 28, 1993, p. 10(A).
4. Eve Sedgwick's *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985) redefined the word "homosocial" to posit a continuum between nonsexual and sexual relationships between men: "To draw the 'homosocial' back into the orbit of 'desire,' of the potentially erotic, . . . is to hypothesize the potential unbrokeness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual—a continuum whose visibility, for men, in our society, is radically disrupted" (pp. 1–2).
5. "'I couldn't sleep at night . . . I'd be worried that some homosexual is going to sneak over and make a pass at me'"; "'Now how am I going to feel if I walk into a dormitory and see pictures on the wall from *Playgirl* magazine?'" are two examples of the scenarios military men sketched in response to the idea that their fellow soldiers could be openly gay. The same men who worried about being made into the objects of homosexual lust claimed that if gays were "let in" there would be violence: "'People are going to go after them physically,' said Jason Puderbaugh, a 21-year-old airman, who also vowed to quit the service if the ban on gays is lifted." All quotes from Dirk Johnson, "Are Homosexuals The New Enemy?" *The New York Times*, January 28, 1993, p. 10(A).
6. The feminist and psychoanalytical (here, specifically Lacanian) case for the thoroughly ideological nature of sexual difference has been made by Kaja Silverman, who has argues that the "dominant fiction" in which our culture attempts to command belief is the equivalence of penis and phallus. The nature of the Lacanian phallus has been the subject of much debate, but here, let "the phallus" signify both human alienation in language (as a system of arbitrary differences which speaks us, rather than vice-versa) and the social system of patriarchy. (See Silverman's "The Lacanian Phallus" in *Differences* 4, no. 1 (Spring 1992), pp. 84–115). No one can "have" the phallus, but insofar as it is also the idealized image of the penis, the normative male subject appears to escape what Silverman calls, following Lacan, "the defining conditions of all subjectivity . . . : lack, specularity, alterity"—because the female subject, defined as lacking a penis, represents and is made to live this constitutive condition of lack for him (*Male Subjectivity*, pp. 50–51).
7. Sedgewick's *Between Men* demonstrates the pervasiveness of this pattern in the British literary tradition.
8. Most early reviews kept the film's secret, as they were instructed to do by Miramax, *The Crying Game*'s distributor, but they spent a lot of time discussing it as a gimmick: see, for example, Caryn James, "'The Crying Game' Wins at Gimmickry," *The New York Times*, January 31, 1993, p. 11(H).
9. These terms have been and are the subject of extensive debate, particularly among feminist theorists. I offer here a working hypothesis which helps to elucidate the limits and the politics of *The Crying Game*'s gender-bending.

10. Recent research in the biology of sex has shown that "biological" sex encompasses chromosomal and hormonal makeup as well as internal and external genitalia, all of which can appear in combinations that defy a simple binary sex system. This research also formed part of the discourse on sex and gender contemporaneous with *The Crying Game*'s popularity. In March of 1993, *The New York Times* ran an almost full-page editorial by Anne Fausto-Sterling, a geneticist, professor of medical science at Brown University, and author of *Myths of Gender: Biological Theories About Woman and Men*, which attacked Western medicine's imposition of the two-sex system on bodies which display a range of "intersexual" possibilities, including hermaphrodism (Anne Fausto-Sterling, "How Many Sexes Are There?" *The New York Times*, March 12, 1993, p. 15(A).
11. Though I cannot do justice to the complexity of Silverman's argument here, I'm again basing my definition on Silverman's feminist and psychoanalytical account of sexual difference (see note 6).
12. Tania Modleski, *Feminism Without Women: Culture and Criticism in a "Postfeminist" Age* (New York: Routledge, 1991).
13. Silverman's chapter on male homosexuality, "A Woman's Soul Enclosed in a Man's Body: Femininity in Male Homosexuality," in *Male Subjectivity* begins by taking this question seriously in order to explore another version of marginal masculinity which would contest the dominant fiction.
14. RuPaul, quoted in "Shorts and Briefs," *San Francisco Sentinel*, March 25, 1993, p. 6. Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990) postulates "the gender performative": "There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (p. 25). Since there is no "original," true model of gender, drag, as a "parodic repetition of 'the original' . . . reveals the original to be nothing other than a parody of the idea of the natural and original" (p. 31). Butler's account slights the depth at which people experience sexual difference and gender identity as *their* subjectivity. In addition, as many of Butler's critics have pointed out, the subversive power of gender parody depends on its audience—the social constitution of "the natural and the original" has real power to shape identity and coerce bodies out of performativity into normativity, i.e., in most parts of the U.S., men who look and act too "feminine" and women who look or act too "butch" in public are likely to verbally harassed if not physically assaulted.
    Marjorie Garber's *Vested Interests: Cross Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York: Routledge, 1992) provides readings of various cultural moments and products rather than a sustained engagement with other theoreticians, but Garber, like Butler, is interested in the potential of drag to subvert normativity itself (particularly, but not only, gender and sex normativity). In Garber's account, transvestism represents a destabilizing "third" possibility which intervenes in the binary logic of culture; it both emblematizes and effects a "category crisis": she claims for transvestism "extraordinary power . . . to disrupt, expose and challenge, putting in question the very notion of the 'original' and of stable identity" (p. 16). *The Crying Game* rather spectacularly resolves the destabilizing crisis in category allegedly posed by crossdressing through the figure of a transvestite whose race and gender attributes reinforce the binary logic of sexual difference.
15. In the prison scene denoument, Dil returns to a passing look and to her once-characteristic humor and self-possession: at the same time, she is both distinctly more androgynous in appearance and standing by her man in the approved feminine fashion.
16. Quoted in Jeff Giles, "'The Crying Game' Star Jaye Davidson Breaks the Silence," *Rolling Stone*, April 1, 1993, p. 39.
17. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967), p. 8.
18. Michael Fox, "Tears Before Bedtime," *SF Weekly*, December 16, 1992, p. 23.
19. As is the case in Frank O'Connor's short story "Guests of the Nation," Brendan Behan's play *The Hostage*, and in Jordan's first film, *Angel* (1982).
20. Fanon, p. 167.
21. Roger Bastide, "Dusky Venus, Black Apollo" in *Race and Social Difference*, Paul Baxter and Basil Sansom, eds., (Harmonsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 187. Quoted in Segal, p. 176 (see note 24).
22. Fanon, p. 170.
23. See Mary Ann Doane's chapter "Dark Continents," in *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 1991), for an extended discussion of race and psychoanalysis. Her comments on Fanon's use of the Lacanian mirror stage to demonstrate how "the woman" and "the black man" can be seen as psychically analogous figures further elaborates this argument:

    > Referring to the "influence exerted on the body by the appearance of another body," Fanon claims, "the Negro, because of his body, impedes the closing of the postural schema of the white man" (160). In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the significance of the mirror phase lies in its provision of an illusory yet strong identity based on a body image. The image of a completely whole and unified body which props up the ego also provides the basis of the psychical terror associated with castration anxiety. To the extent that the black "impedes the closing of the postural schema of the white man," to the extent to which he poses the possibility of *another* body, his position would appear analogous to that of the woman in psychoanalysis, who embodies the threat of castration. Yet, the woman's threat is configured as a physical lack or absence while the black males' threat is posited as that of an *overpresence*, a monstrous penis. (p. 255)

24. See Lynne Segal's chapter, "Competing Masculinities (III): Black Masculinity and the White Man's Black Man," in her *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1990), pp. 175–181, for a more detailed argument about the relationship of black masculinity to femininity in the white racist imagination.

Film Reviews

Naked

Writer/director: Mike Leigh. Producer: Simon Channing-Williams. Cinematographer: Dick Pope. Production designer: Alison Chitty. Editor: Jon Gregory. Music: Andrew Dickson. Fine Line Features.

Mike Leigh's last two films, *High Hopes* and *Life Is Sweet*, do not quite prepare one for the level of harrowing emotional experience in *Naked*. Of course, neither of those earlier films is light, escapist fare, despite the satiric, even farcical tone. Both films contain large doses of familial angst and pathology, and *High Hopes* expresses a sardonic revulsion with the whole Thatcherite ethos and its yuppie devotees. But they both conclude on a consoling note with bittersweet images of possible life affirmation and family reconciliation. The world and the lives of the two films' characters can never be quite righted, but nobody falls into the void, and the chance for some semblance of redemption remains.

However, *Naked*, right from its opening scene—a lurching tracking shot along a grim Manchester night alley, where the film's protagonist, Johnny, is seen brutalising a woman—is a rawer, much more savage work. Johnny is a working-class drifter and Dostoyevskean-style intellectual—a social outsider like Cyril, the motorcycle messenger of *High Hopes*, but without the political ideology or sweetness visible beneath Cyril's quiet anger and class resentment. In fact, Johnny is destructive and self-destructive, a literate monologist whose anger and sadism act as much stronger forces within him than his capacity for concern. It's women who bear the brunt of his physical and emotional rage, who suffer in being casually manhandled, insulted, and rejected by him.

Johnny is given a ferocious, luminous performance by David Thewlis, an actor whom Leigh used in *Life Is Sweet* to play the small role of the bulimic twin's relatively sane boyfriend. Thewlis succeeds in granting the hostile Johnny an emotional complexity, largeness of mind, elegance of movement, wit, and perverse charm that make his capacity to attract women perfectly understandable. Wispy-bearded, tall, thin, dressed in black, Johnny is given to endless orations on subjects ranging from the silence of the human body to the architecture of modern office buildings ("postmodern gas chambers") and the nature of time and God. Still, he's no Cyril, so there is no speechifying about the evil Thatcher, class inequality, or the oppressiveness of the social order. His soliloquies are alternately absurd, compulsive, perceptive, and truly poetic and visionary, as well as a mixture of all these qualities at once. At moments, Leigh seems to have made Johnny's talk a bit too self-conscious and literary, too carefully constructed. But at the same time, his soliloquies give Johnny's fate greater poignancy—a portrait of a despairing man who has displaced his imagination and intellectual resources into pathetic, relentlessly dazzling verbal exhibitions and corrosive put-downs.

Deborah Maclaren and David Thewlis

Johnny is a waste—a self-aware, often cruel and dangerous one. All the women he encounters after he flees Manchester for London—though distinctively different from each other—share a painful neediness. Johnny may be seductive, but it takes little insight to be wary of this aggressive, barbed-tongued, unwashed man in a threadbare raincoat. Almost all the women, however, turn a blind eye to the threatening aspects of Johnny, and hungrily embrace him. There is sturdy, weary Louise, his former working-class girlfriend from Manchester (Lesley Sharp), and her masochistic, punk-outfitted, drugged roommate Sophie (Katrin Cartlidge), who as soon as she meets Johnny has violent sex with

him. An older woman, Jane Austen-reading and alcoholic, despondently opens herself up sexually to him, only to be humiliatingly put down as looking like his mother. Not only does he refuse to have sex, but he steals her books into the bargain. Finally, there is a silent, melancholy waitress who takes Johnny to her flat where he bathes, seems to let his guard down, and wants to linger. In this case, however, she suddenly starts to cry and just as abruptly throws him out into the cold. Her behavior is unexplained, but one senses that she herself is too hurt and alienated to make any human connection.

In *Naked* every character is emotionally isolated, bruised, or aimless, the film permeated by a vision of hopelessness. It envelops the relationships between men and women—the men harsh, violent, and terrified of commitment, the women emotionally starved, setting themselves up as victims. However, despite Johnny's brutal sexist behavior, the film's perspective is not misogynistic. Though a number of the women characters are victimized, they always remain singular people, never becoming mere sex objects. In fact, as is often the case in Leigh's work, the only relatively strong character is a woman, Louise. And the misogyny, at least on Johnny's part, seems just one element among many that express the self-loathing which permeates his life. No character in this film is free of a blighted existence.

Much of the action takes place during a couple of agonizing days on the streets of London. For after Sophie begins to clamor for his affection, Johnny flees Louise's flat and heads for London's Soho. On the barren, seedy night streets he meets a stunted Glaswegian couple, who howl an almost incomprehensible form of expletive-filled English. Johnny wanders with them through the encampments of London's homeless under Waterloo's grimy railway arches. But he remains amiably detached from this graceless pair—treating the couple as if they were members of a different, somewhat comic species (the "petulant dwarf," he calls the man). He has a more meaningful encounter with a lonely, voyeuristic, philosophical watchman, Brian (Peter Wight)—the only other intellectually oriented character in the film. Brian reads the *TLS* and the Bible, and knowingly does work "a monkey could do," escaping his quietly desperate and oppressive life by dreaming of a solitary future in a crumbling cottage on the Irish coast.

Johnny debunks Brian's fantasies about a future idyll by asserting that God is evil, that greed and pain are the human condition, and that it's a hopeless world where man has no future. His vision is an apocalyptic one, albeit not much more intellectually sophisticated than an autodidact's sophomoric philosophizing. But in the context of the film's generally inarticulate characters, his talk is striking. It also provides a metaphysical dimension—a sense of the universe's meaninglessness—that Leigh has never mined before. Still, for all Johnny's rhetorical onslaughts, the final word is Brian's, who solemnly (almost too low to hear) warns Johnny, "Don't ruin your life." It's a cautionary word which Johnny is too far gone to heed.

Utilizing his usual directorial technique (he shapes the characters with the active involvement of his cast, who are given a situation in which to create a character before the film is formally scripted), Leigh has constructed a gallery of characters who are individuated and true. The one glaring exception that strikes a thoroughly false note is the character called both Jeremy and Sebastian (Greg Cruttwell), who looks like a young Dirk Bogarde and seems to be an homage to the Bogarde of Losey's *The Servant*. This upper-class figure operates in the film as Johnny's totally vile alter ego. He is a smirking misogynist who treats all the women he encounters with violent contempt. His character is without any redeeming charm or vulnerability—a man whose nihilistic behavior goes over the top,

Katrin Cartlidge (left) and Lesley Sharp

a cartoon of an upper-class, drawling, decadent psychopath. As in *High Hopes*, Leigh again here demonstrates how his hatred for the upper class can subvert his capacity to do anything more than caricature them. The one-dimensional, frightening Jeremy also serves to make the more complex, less predictable Johnny look a great deal more sympathetic. For though he too behaves malevolently toward women, Johnny is still capable of a few caring moments (there is a stirring scene of Louise and a bloodied, beaten Johnny singing wistfully about returning home to "rainy Manchester"). He also victimizes himself more thoroughly than he victimizes anybody else. It's not that the director tries to vindicate his callous, solipsistic behavior, but one feels Leigh's identification with Johnny's imagination and despair, and consequently his need to make the character less of a monster in the eyes of the audience.

Apart from Johnny, the other characters are basically sketches, but all are given a genuine presence and idiosyncratic, even comic, life by Leigh. (Leigh infuses the film with black comedy and a sense of the absurd, but this never provides genuine relief from the film's sense of damnation.) Sophie speaks through the side of her mouth, and, in her dazed manner, can be witty. (When Johnny, undressing her, fumbles with the buttons on her leather vest, she says, "We tried the stairs, now try the elevator," and points to the zipper.) Louise has sufficient strength to stand up to Jeremy's threats, but wants nothing more than a relationship with "somebody who'll talk to you after fucking with them." She is balanced and caring, but conscious that she is facing a dreary life with so few options that even an impossible future with Johnny is something to long for. Leigh augments the authenticity of these characters' behavior by often shooting both of the women in tight close-up—revealing every pore, scar, and blemish on their lived-in, real faces.

Finally there is Sandra (Claire Skinner), the pretty, neat, ostensibly normal nurse who owns the house that Louise and Sophie rent rooms in. She returns to the house at the film's end and is absolutely horrified by the garbage, vomit, blood, and general disorder that she finds. Sandra is efficient, but speaks in strangled, unfinished sentences—her desperation for order clearly springing from a feeling that the world is out of control. And in *Naked*, no character can quite keep things intact; life just won't hold together.

In a Leigh film, the emphasis is on facial expressions and the exchanges of dialogue between his characters, and most of *Naked* consists of two-shots and telling close-ups. There are few establishing shots here, the physical setting always subordinated to the interactions of the characters. Still, in *Naked*, Leigh uses shadow and light and silhouetting in arresting ways. There is even one long take where a haunted-looking, back-lit Johnny stands in full shot amid the desolation and darkness, with another homeless man seen dimly in the background. For a moment, Johnny becomes more than an abrasive, anguished drifter—indeed, the embodiment of man alone in the universe.

Resonant images and symbols of this sort are not Leigh's normal mode, and Johnny is no portentous symbolic figure or social type. His behavior is too bound by contradiction. Leigh doesn't provide the audience with a rubric to get a facile hold on Johnny: social victim, sociopath, product of dysfunctional family are all within the realm of probability, but none exhausts the possibilities. Leigh can't be mistaken for an Abel Ferrara creating (as in *Bad Lieutenant)* a central character who indulges in one elongated nihilistic rant against God, morality, life itself. Johnny's talk has much more dark humor and nuance than that, and he elicits a mixture of audience sympathy and revulsion which Ferrara's simplistic anti-heroes cannot evoke. When Johnny rejects his last life raft—Louise's commitment to him—as he hops and winces with pain down the middle of the street, fleeing to nowhere, we feel it's appropriate that such a destructive and ravaged figure doesn't receive a last-minute reprieve. But the film also suggests that there is something humanly valuable that could have been salvaged in Johnny; and Leigh, without sentimentalizing him, leaves the audience at the end with a profound feeling of loss.

There is no question that the dark vision of the film owes a great deal to the general pessimism and sense of malaise and decline that dominate post-Thatcher England. Leigh is a politically conscious director who believes present-day English society is intolerable. His characters' anguish can't be severed from a society where a great many people are on the dole and homeless, and where being born into the working class still constricts life's choices. Johnny, of course, is working class, on the dole, and homeless. But his self-destructive behavior can't be reduced to a set of political and social variables, and the same is true of the film's other characters. Their despair may be seen as metaphysical, psychological, or political in nature, but for Leigh, it's sufficient to present their behavior and emotional states, rather than a set of explanations.

Amidst a mass of mechanical, star- and genre-driven films, Mike Leigh is an anomalous figure. He is an auteur who makes low-budget films (largely fi-

nanced by Britain's Channel Four) which center on ambiguities of character rather than on high-concept narratives. In *Naked,* he has taken those characters both closer to and sometimes over the emotional edge, and has made a brilliantly performed, intricately written film—his own *Journey to the End of the Night.*

LEONARD QUART

■ Leonard Quart teaches at the College of Staten Island and at the Graduate Center at CUNY; he is one of the editors of *Cineaste.*

The Piano

Writer/director: Jane Campion. Producer: Jan Chapman. Cinematographer: Stuart Dryburgh. Production designer: Andrew McAlpine. Costume designer: Janet Patterson. Music: Michael Nyman. Miramax.

Jane Campion's *Sweetie* (1989) described the calamitous impact of a raucous schizophrenic woman upon her relatives. *An Angel at My Table* (1990), based on the autobiography of Janet Frame, depicted the no less harrowing effects of institutionalization upon a female writer misdiagnosed as chronically schizophrenic. *The Piano,* directed from her own screenplay, comprises Campion's most extraordinary exploration of unsettled, unsettling feminine outsiders to date. Its heroine is Ada McGrath (Holly Hunter), a Victorian unwed mother of pallid countenance and somber dress, whose silent compliance conceals and protects a fiercely unconventional spirit.

Ada is not so much unable as *unwilling* to speak. She suffers, or, depending upon one's viewpoint, practices elective mutism. This rare, puzzling condition usually develops in early childhood and occurs rather more frequently in girls than boys. The electively mute child has been characterized as symbiotically bound to a powerfully possessive adult; as alternately clinging and shy, or intensely stubborn and negativistic; as terribly fearful of the sound of its own voice; as traumatized by abuse or non-abusive injury; as fighting intense family scapegoating with passive-aggressive silence.[1] Interestingly enough, especially in light of Ada's character, the syndrome is thought by some to represent a strategy of active manipulation and control, rather than merely being a symptom of autistic withdrawal.

Campion compounds the enigma of Ada's condition by furnishing only the sparest details of her background or the early forces which have played upon her. She lives in a cloistered, mid-Victorian Glasgow home. *The Piano*'s establishing sequence begins out of focus, as in a hypnogogic state. The camera peers at the emerging world through the lattice of a child's fingers, while Ada's six-year-old voice tells us she ceased speaking at that age, and does not remember why. (One notes that *The Piano*'s narrative engine is propelled by the internal monologue of a character who cannot or will not speak—another compelling paradox spun out of Ada's mutism.)

She relates that her beloved father (neither he or any other family member is ever seen) has a strangely approving notion of her affliction as a "dark talent." He's arranged her marriage to a lonely expatriate English farmer in New Zealand. Quite possibly he is the recipient of her dowry.

In a trice Ada is whisked over the sea, dumped unceremoniously upon the New Zealand shore with her baggage, her precious piano, and her out-of-wedlock daughter Flora (Anna Paquin)—a precocious and voluble nine-year-old who is Ada's interpreter to the world. The two communicate through their own invented sign system.

Campion has kept the camera claustrophobically screwed down until now: Ada's instant voyage is literally *embodied* by the fragmented hands and torsos of the sailors carrying her from skiff to land (a locution the director used to underscore the heroine's schizoid isolation from an equally alienated husband in *Sweetie*). The mise-en-scène briefly opens out into a vista of stormswept grey sky, huge waves tumbling against a barren stretch of sand. One's view is then constricted again, and for the most part will remain so. Tight close-ups further accentuate the nuances of an unfolding and mute—or barely spoken—triangle of desire.

Stewart, Ada's new husband (Sam Neill), is stiff-upper-lip reticence personified: handsome, not unkind, but disastrously unimaginative. His narrow utilitarian purposes immediately oppress Ada's sensi-

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The Piano: Anna Paquin (left) and Holly Hunter

bility when he refuses to bring her instrument back to his plantation. In a breathtaking long shot the lone piano is limned starkly against the rolling surf: it's suddenly a vivid icon of cultural collision, of yet another stifling of Ada's voice, of her delivery into paltry domesticity in a startling alien environment.

Stewart's home is kept by gabbling, censorious female relatives. Ada and Flora retreat from a bizarre simulacrum of English gentility into their room and private world. The taciturn Stewart, unlike the rest of his clan (and much like Ada's father) accepts, even approves of Ada's disability ("There's something to be said for silence"). As frustration with his unconsummated marriage mounts, Stewart wonders if Ada might be mad as well as mute, yet grows ever more entranced with her.

Stewart's neighbor, Baines (Harvey Keitel), offers to purchase the beached piano from Stewart for 80 prime acres, with music instruction by Ada thrown into the bargain. (Campion permits an inference that the two men have previously done business, and—perhaps as a result—aren't altogether happy with each other.) Stewart agrees, hoping she can be drawn out of her shell. Baines makes an unprepossessing pupil. He's squat, illiterate, his face tattooed like the ribald Maoris who lounge about his ramshackle hut.

Baines offers to sell back the piano one key at a time in return for voyeuristic liberties with Ada's person. Apparently shocked at first, she nevertheless consents with her usual passivity; then piquantly shifts the grounds of what seems like a perverse, humiliating bargain, demanding more keys for each favor. Eventually the two lie together nude without making love; Hunter's unexpectedly voluptuous body is pressed against Keitel's compact, powerfully muscled, yet unglamorous frame—a moment both unutterably moving and incredibly erotic.

Baines grows disgusted with himself for engineering a degrading charade: he was instantly smitten with Ada, and could think of no other way to court her. When he proposes ending their "arrangement" and returning the piano to Stewart's house, she flies into a fury and quickly takes him to bed. One infers this is her first real passion. The relationship which engendered Flora seems to have been short-lived and cerebral, with a man Ada implies was too timorous to keep "listening" to the quicksilver mind and tumultuous roil of emotion hidden beneath her silence.

Stewart discovers the affair. In an exceptionally creepy scene, he peeps upon the trysting couple from underneath the floor of Baines' hut—*he*, not Baines, is revealed as the repressed voyeur. Enraged, he forbids

her Baines' presence, literally penning her up in his house with the piano until she can be "good." Unaccountably, she appears to warm to her husband, and he gives her back her freedom.

Ada is next seen pressing her lips against her mirrored image, then caressing the piano's keys with a sensual backhand gesture. When she attempts to awaken Stewart with the same languorous touch he cannot abide his arousal and rebuffs her. Rather than rejection, she feels release. It's subtly apparent that while one part of her has been dutifully attempting to shape herself to Stewart's limitations, the larger part has been using her husband as a substitute object—as well as her piano and her own reflected self. All are now metonyms of her rapturous infatuation with Baines.

She entrusts Flora to give Baines a piece of the piano's keyboard, upon which she has penned a testament of her love. In a jealous fit, Flora brings it to Stewart instead. At this moment, he represents the lesser of two evils, since he poses no threat to Flora's symbiotic attachment to her mother. But the child, caught up in fantasies of retaliation which are ultimately aimed at regaining her mother's affection, misgauges the potential for violence born out of Stewart's narcissistic injuries. Stewart takes an ax to the piano, then to Ada's hand. Amidst a welter of screams and blood, he awakens to a horrified recognition of his unleashed brutality—and to the impossibility of Ada's ever coming to heel, ever truly becoming his wife. Wishing only to be quit of her uncanny power over him—"I am afraid of her *will*!"—he relinquishes her to Baines.

Campion's tale sounds over-the-top penny-dreadful in the telling, but it's tremendously absorbing on the screen. The dark side of Eros is often diminished today: sexuality is chattered to death in the tabloids, on "Oprah," or in the clinic. *The Piano* restores the orphic power of sex. In the film's puritanical milieu, desire is filtered through murky Victorian notions about feminine purity or evil, through the era's fascination with the sway of the primitive, the savage imperatives of nature, the chilly balm of death.

The Piano's protagonists are intensely passionate. But Campion intimates they are also erotic naïfs (the men in particular), who confront sexuality as if it were newly minted in the disconcerting unfamiliarity of the New Zealand bush. Stewart can only follow the rulebook that stringently tutors him on patriarchal duty, feminine docility, the white man's imperial burden. Baines, who emigrated after being abandoned by his wife for reasons never explicated, is discovered sunk in debauched despair.

Ada is the most daring of the three in her struggles with Eros. It is moot whether some ungovernable childhood abuse, some terrible skepticism of ever being understood or cherished has driven her behind her wall of stillness. Her sea change liberates the extraordinary "will" that so infuriates (and intimidates) her husband. It surges forth with a force so primal as to seem impersonal to her, spurring an unruly independence—and a tender carnality which finds its match in the bosom of the no-less-wounded (and nearly as inarticulate) Baines.

The Piano's literary antecedents include those lurid Gothic romances replete with frail heroines, exotic locales, and masterful/sinister noblemen; the *amours fous* of *Wuthering Heights* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*; fairy tales with *amour fou* preoccupations, notably *Beauty and the Beast* and *Bluebeard*. By design or unconscious intention, Campion has adroitly reinterpreted such sources. Her work exemplifies the unique spin on Gothic strategems, inflected by the surreal peculiarities of "down under" nature, which has distinguished the cinema of Australia and New Zealand at least since Peter Weir's *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975) and *The Last Wave* (1977).[2] Stuart Dryburgh's photography of the deep aquamarine shade and rough, tangled vegetation of the New Zealand bush serves to highlight the protagonists' convoluted and excessive emotionality (as when the vengeful Stewart rushes upon Ada, and both become caught in a twisted mesh of ancient vine).

The Piano is true to its period in every respect (saving its music), while simultaneously addressing a host of issues dear to contemporary cultural critics and film scholars. Feminist theoreticians have notably explored the suppression of the feminine voice under patriarchy's insensible rule and the attendant possibility for recovering that voice at the very core of its suppression.[3] In this context, Ada's muteness can be interpreted as a limit case of patriarchal domination, both symptom *and* countercoup.[4]

In a much cited study, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Laura Mulvey asserts that classic Hollywood cinema treats woman as the object of male gaze; her disruptive sexuality must be neutralized by transforming her into a docile fetish, marrying her off, or killing her.[5] Ada's two suitors attempt to "objectify" her by all of these measures (Stewart stops just short of murder). Yet Campion has her turn the tables and make Stewart and Baines helplessly enthralled objects of *her* gaze, *her* desire.

Harvey Keitel
and Hunter

The arrogance and ignorance of the colonizing consciousness toward native culture and the parallel bewilderment, silent contempt, and resentment of the Maoris toward their English masters constitute a less visible, but no less crucial ideological subtext of *The Piano*. Stewart is horrified when he sees Flora and her Maori friends in semi-masturbatory play. What he takes for licentiousness betokens the Maori absence of Victorian childhood sexual repression (their taboos lie elsewhere).

During the colonists' staging of *Bluebeard*, the horrified locals rush upon the stage to prevent the butchering of the wives (presaging Stewart's savage attack upon Ada). The Maoris are indeed untutored in Western drama, but Campion's chief point here is that Bluebeard's sadistic intention toward his wives is deeply offensive to them.

While her sympathies are tilted toward the Maoris, Campion's perspective on settler as well as indigenous tribe is for the most part coolly balanced. The Maoris are not glorified (or degraded) as noble primitives. The director shows that they and the English are equally capable of being wrongheadedly amused or appalled by each other's Otherness. Nor is Stewart an unregenerate villain. His hopefulness about winning Ada's love in the face of her fierce disdain is as pitiable as his violence upon her is odious.

Sam Neill poignantly captures Stewart's uncompre-hending pain over Ada's disaffection as well as his repellent paternalism. Anna Pacquin's Flora is a radiant delight. Harvey Keitel has created a galaxy of Caliban-like characters;

On the Beach:
Paquin and Hunter

The Piano shows him evolving into the light, Baines' defensive brutishness yielding to an amazing, grave sweetness.

But the film's complex heart belongs to Hunter. Her perky American roles (*Broadcast News* and *Raising Arizona* [1987], *Always* and *Miss Firecracker* [1989]) do not prepare one for the acute intelligence and volcanic sensuality spoken by the actress's pale face, her flashing eye, and her exquisitely tuned gestures. She transforms Ada's perennial black dress, bonnet, camisole, and bustle into a prison for her character's body and soul.

Hunter is also an able pianist; her rendition of Michael Nyman's score heightens her verisimilitude in the role. Nyman has often reworked earlier styles with a kind of Brechtian defamiliarization (e.g., his brittle deconstruction of Purcell in *The Draughtman's Contract* [1982]). In *The Piano*, he refuses to dissect or defamiliarize mid-nineteenth-century Romanticism, indeed makes little reference at all to the musical idioms of the period. Using New Age harmonies and plangent arpeggios, he has composed an elegiac improvisation on wild Scottish folk themes which would have proven bathetic in less skillful hands.

Voyaging with Baines to resettlement in urban New Zealand, Ada pitches her piano overboard lest the boat capsize. She becomes entangled in a rope, and is herself pulled over the side. She sinks into the deep, but to her utter amazement decides to free herself—"my will has chosen life!" The image dissolves to scenes of that life; her now adult voiceover relates that Baines has repaired Stewart's assault and provided her with a curious metallic finger. She has taken up teaching piano, is learning to speak haltingly again, and muses that she is probably viewed as the "town freak."

The conclusion of this intricate fable of feminine identity is ambiguous. In *The Piano*'s enigmatic opening, a child peers at a world yet unborn through fingers which both hide and disclose. It's not precisely clear whether they belong to Ada or Flora. In retrospect, one speculates that Campion is meditating upon a Victorian girl's fascinated, terrified fantasies about her path toward sexual awakening.

For Ada, these fantasies unfold in an odyssey shot through with references to voyeurism, the primal scene, rape and castration fears—and an overarching anxiety over incestuous desire. It is moot whether Ada has been banished by her father to New Zealand in aid of improving his cash flow or has herself actively sought flight from an imperious, possibly seductive/abusive father who prized and perhaps enabled her loss of voice. Stewart may be interpreted as his neurotic reinvention; Baines, as embodying his gentler, more wholesome recuperation. One hopes Flora will find calmer seas. Campion offers subliminal hope that she may fare better than her mother, not least because Baines represents a father who can allow a woman a voice and space of her own.

But the director also intimates that her heroine's decision to voyage from the New Zealand wilds back to "civilized" life with Baines may constitute a sacrifice of her freer, darker nature, one that perhaps would not have occurred had there been no Flora. In jettisoning the piano, Ada seems compelled not only by the imperative of survival but also by the need to abjure the dangerous Dionysian thrust of her temperament. One is left with a ruling image of her eerily suspended in mid-ocean like some tenebrous, funereal blossom, before her "will" chooses a tamer Eros over the Thanatos which may well be the ultimate desire prefigured by her muteness.

HARVEY GREENBERG

■ Harvey Greenberg is Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine and the author of *Screen Memories: Hollywood Cinema on the Psychoanalytic Couch.*

Notes

1. For an excellent overview of the subject, see Larry B. Silverman, "Elective Mutism," ch. 42.1, under *Other Disorders of Infancy, Childhood, and Adolescence*; in *Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry*, Harold J. Kaplan and Benjamin J. Sadock, eds., Volume 2, 5th Edition (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1989, 1877–1889).
2. For an astute overview of the peculiar inflection of Gothic elements in New Zealand and Australian cinema, see Caryn James, "A Distinctive Shade of Darkness," *New York Times*, Arts and Leisure Section, November 28, 1993, pp. 13, 22–23.
3. See, inter alia, Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988), and Amy Lawrence, *Echo and Narcissus: Women's Voices in Classical Hollywood Cinema* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991).
4. Gaylyn Studlar analyzes an analogous conflation of submission and protest in Max Ophul's *Letter from an Unknown Woman*: "Masochistic Performance and Female Subjectivity in *Letter from an Unknown Woman*," *Cinema Journal* 33 (Spring, 1994).
5. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and the Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16, no. 3 (1975), pp. 8–18.

Book Reviews

Avant-Garde Film

Motion Studies

By Scott MacDonald. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993. $44.95 cloth; $13.95 paper.

Except for an introductory summary of the principal interests of avant-garde film-makers from the 1920s to the present, Scott MacDonald makes no attempt to survey the field of avant-garde film-making. Instead, he offers 15 short chapters, each headed by the name of a single film-maker and one of her or his films, starting with "Yoko Ono: *No. 4 (Bottoms)*" and ending with "Peter Watkins: *The Journey*." However, most of the chapters are not, in fact, limited to a discussion of only one film. For example, the Yoko Ono chapter situates *No. 4 (Bottoms)* in relation to her other film-making projects; the chapter on Ernie Gehr's *Serene Velocity* includes detailed discussion of Gehr's *Morning* and *Eureka*; the chapter on Su Friedrich's *The Ties That Bind* concludes with extended remarks on the same film-maker's *Sink or Swim*; Godfrey Reggio's *Powaqqatsi* and the earlier *Koyaanisqatsi* are given nearly equal attention, as are Trinh T. Minh-ha's *Naked Spaces—Living Is Round* and its predecessor, *Reassemblage*.

While it is true that most of the films MacDonald discusses were made since 1970, he cannot be accused of favoring one kind of film or school of film-makers, as is evident from the titles I have already mentioned—to which can be added Michael Snow's *Wavelength*, Hollis Frampton's *Zorns Lemma*, J. J. Murphy's *Print Generation*, Morgan Fisher's *Standard Gauge*, Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen's *Riddles of the Sphinx*, James Benning's *American Dreams*, Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi's *From the Pole to the Equator*, Warren Sonbert's *The Carriage Trade*, and Yvonne Rainer's *Journeys from Berlin/1971*.

Despite their diversity, these films illustrate an overriding argument, or related set of arguments, which I found both convincing and illuminating. Indeed, the strength of the book (in addition to MacDonald's sympathetic, but sharp-eyed, readings of individual films) is the easy, undogmatic way it demonstrates similarities among films as different as Yoko Ono's minimalist study of bare bottoms, Trinh Minh-ha's poetic and intensely personal approach to ethnographic film-making, and Peter Watkins' earnest, sprawling documentary on the media, community action, and the Bomb.

Anyone familiar with MacDonald's interviews with independent film-makers published in the two volumes of *A Critical Cinema* (University of California Press, 1988 and 1992) will not be surprised by his emphasis on the avant-garde's potential for "critiquing dimensions of the commercial cinema," as he puts it in the present volume. More original is his examination of the ways avant-garde film-makers use serial organization—a kind of temporal grid—and, in most cases, long takes as well, to "focus attention—an almost meditative level of attention—on subject matter normally ignored or marginalized by mass-entertainment films." He relates these formal practices to Muybridge's photographic "motion studies" (hence the subtitle of his book) and to the Lumière brothers' simple, direct observations of everyday events through extended single takes from a fixed camera position.

MacDonald is not the first to recognize affinities between early cinema and avant-garde film, but to my knowledge, no one has applied that insight to such a wide range of avant-garde works, or argued that Muybridgean seriality and the appropriation of early cinema's "primitive mode of representation" (in Noël Burch's terminology) not only produces a critical, oppositional alternative to mass-entertainment films but has the power, in MacDonald's words, "to reinvigorate our reverence for the visual world around us and develop our patience for experiencing it fully." That humane and constructive approach to a body of work which many find difficult to "understand" and impossible to appreciate, makes this book an excellent introduction to avant-garde film, as well as a valuable source of insights for those who need no introduction but have not thought about avant-garde film in this way before.

WILLIAM C. WEES

■ William C. Wees teaches at McGill University and is the author of *Light Moving in Time, Studies in the Visual Aesthetics of Avant-Garde Film.*

Clint Eastwood

A Cultural Production

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Paul Smith's study of Clint Eastwood's movies is an instructive example of what can happen when an academic critic tries to deal with a popular figure whose work shows a degree of intelligence yet is disarmingly unpretentious. Elaborate theoretical maneuvering pro-

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duces refined insights, yet the qualities of the films—and the actor's persona—that have proven so attractive to a popular audience are stubbornly elusive.

Smith has a lot to say about Eastwood's movies, but the book's theory and jargon may put off general readers who might be drawn to a book on Eastwood. With the ordinary run of university press film books this would be a pointless criticism, since such books are usually marketed to a very small community of readers. Smith's book, though, has obvious crossover appeal, given its subject and the renaissance of Eastwood's career following the extraordinary critical and popular reception of *Unforgiven* and *In the Line of Fire*. Furthermore, Smith acknowledges trying to produce a nonstandard academic book for nonspecialist readers. Those readers, however, will find that the book says less than they may have hoped for about Eastwood while concentrating more abstractly on the sociological implications of the narratives and images of the films in which Eastwood has starred.

The book is composed of a series of loosely related chapters, which need not be read in order, that explore such topics as the Sergio Leone Westerns, the Dirty Harry character, the workings of Eastwood's Malpaso production company, and attitudes toward race and women expressed by the films. Because chapter topics are thematically defined and are continually shifting, Smith does not proceed chronologically through Eastwood's career, which sometimes confuses the reader about when things happen. The book needs a comprehensive filmography so that the reader can keep the sequencing of events and the development of themes and images clear.

Each of the topics Smith discusses is presented with intellectual richness, and he has clearly thought at length and in detail about its significance. At times, however, this richness is compromised by a tendency to overstate a case in the interest of making a theoretical point.

For example, in the sections that discuss Sergio Leone's influence on Eastwood, Smith hypothesizes that all of Eastwood's subsequent Westerns are attempts by him to restore the rupture within the genre that Leone's work created, with *Pale Rider*, the most classically inclined of Eastwood's Westerns, being the culmination of this program. Of Leone's work, Smith writes that it constituted "a postmodernist assault on the settled midcentury modes of the dominant culture of Hollywood." This formulation tends to ignore deviant patterns within the genre pre-existing Leone (e.g., Aldrich's *Vera Cruz*) and directors such as Peckinpah who assaulted the genre contemporaneously with Leone. In addition, Smith's hypothesis that Eastwood has aimed to restore the Western to its traditional classical status and right the "wrongs" Leone had done to it must necessarily minimize the importance of a clearly revisionist film like *Unforgiven*. (In a brief coda to his book, Smith savages this film.)

In other simplifications, Smith notes "the almost complete silence of Hollywood westerns on the question of minority rights." The sheer wrongness of this is impressive. As even a casual familiarity with the Western genre should attest, Hollywood's portrait of Native Americans, while deeply flawed, has not been unidimensional and has not infrequently acknowledged their claims and grievances.

Smith maintains that "the emergence of racial minorities into any overt political independence or agency exceeds the possibility of the genre because it exceeds the cultural imaginary of white America." Here, as elsewhere, Smith gets swept away by the logic of his own rhetoric and misses the significance of counterexamples. Within limits, the Western is quite elastic and adaptable. A recent film like Mario van Peebles' *Posse*, with its African-American heroes and themes, challenges Smith's assertions about what the genre can and cannot do.

Smith's book has been published at a very opportune moment and will gain visibility by virtue of Eastwood's renewed popularity. The general reader may find the level of analysis to be somewhat remote and dry. The book's theorization of its subject is challenging and thorough but it could be more nuanced, and the occasional factual error is disturbing in a book which is brief and which aims to be authoritative (e.g., Michael Cimino, not John Milius, directed *Thunderbolt and Lightfoot*). Smith's book offers a unique perspective on Eastwood's work but it will certainly not be the last word.

STEPHEN PRINCE

■ Stephen Prince teaches at Virginia Tech and is the Book Review Editor of *Film Quarterly*.

Dreaming Identities

Class, Gender and Generation in 1980s Hollywood Movies

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Elizabeth Traube, an anthropologist, is as witty as she is wise. Her lively and engaging *Dreaming Identities* is also refreshingly non-reductionist. Popular Hollywood films of the 1980s, Traube insists, "are not made by Men for Women, as much psychoanalytic film criticism implies. They are made by members of the professional middle class, who are overwhelmingly white and male, for primarily white audiences who are divided by class as well as gender." What interests Traube is not

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that the Hollywood films offered to this audience affirm "regressive, backward-looking values," but *how* they do this, how they reinflect the values in question, how they fold back gestures of discontent, resistance, and rebellion into accommodation and incorporation.

That Hollywood, in broad terms, has been doing these things all along does not obscure the changes Traube associates with 1980s movies in particular. This was a decade when "gender and family issues posed a special challenge for a movie industry motivated primarily by commercial profit. In an era characterized by mounting antifeminism and widespread nostalgia for traditional family forms, on the one hand, and by a continuing struggle for gender equality . . . on the other, attracting the widest possible audience was no simple matter. . . . One implicit strategy for commercial success was to appeal to . . . anxiety over women abandoning their traditional place in the home while offering a non-traditional form of fatherhood as the ideal solution." This "ingenious" strategy does much to explain why "the authoritarian fantasy of recovering a traditional familial order has *not* dominated the movies of the 1980s [emphases mine]. . . . They endorse change in gender relations but seek to limit or confine it." Hollywood "negotiated the rightward turn [of the 1980s] circumspectly [by] rehabilitating patriarchal authority" along nontraditional lines.

The new twist is "not that men must teach women how to be women, for this they do in movies of all persuasions, but that men themselves already are what women need to become . . . the polarity between nurturance and autonomy is modified to the point that nurturant femininity becomes a sign of masculine autonomy"—as in *Three Men and a Baby*'s depiction of "what fun mothering can be when it's done by the right men." This is an idea reinflected by another film "that invites us to imagine a world without mothers," *Mrs. Doubtfire*. A good woman is so hard to find that (as Michael Covino put it) she has to become a man.

Such developments are not just absurd, and are not at all innocent. Movies "represent as a noble masculine response what is in reality achieved by the efforts of working women to divide domestic responsibility on more equal lines." Again, "to annex female nurturance to male autonomy," to make nurturance "a new signifier of masculine self-sufficiency" is to reconfigure gender polarities as a way of not dissolving them; and this is how accommodation works.

Meanwhile, back at the workplace, a similar reconfiguration can be seen, at least by the moviegoer. "For the culture industry's coveted, young middle-class audience," in Traube's words, "the bureaucratic corporation is the most likely destination, and it is the locus of anxieties the [movie] industry has long known how to market." It marketed these in specific ways during the 1980s, when new kinds of masculine identity emerged for the first time. The paternal heroes of yesteryear, along with the "sensitive sons" of the 1970s, got displaced at one level by the figure of the "playful, permissive patriarch," and at another, more obnoxious one by cocky young male camaraderie. "Boyish and determined, this new hero asserts his masculinity through practiced duplicity rather than manly candor or honest labor." These well-chosen words apply to Tom Cruise in *any* of his roles (one of the nice things about growing older is the sure and certain knowledge it brings that one is *never* going to be like Tom Cruise).

All these developments (which are ominous enough in their own right) have as their downside (!) the punishment meted out to masculinized women, particularly within the white-collar world of managerial bureaucracy. Nineteen-eighties films, in Traube's words, "construct bureaucratic seduction as a positively valued style for men, while simultaneously discouraging its cultivation by women, whose career ambitions are ritually tamed." The formula: "identify the dangerous forces loose in society with the upper middle-class, professional managerial woman." The upshot: Sigourney Weaver in *Working Girl*, "a version of the monstrous female sexuality that she herself defeated as the Rambette of *Alien*." This defeat was not exactly terminal. Recall the end of *Alien 3*, where Weaver commits suicide while giving birth to the same baby monster. I find myself wishing that Elizabeth Traube had gone on to discuss this.

The author's sense of the absurd never lets her—or us—down. She is able to stretch it to cover absurdities in the film theory she read for the first time while writing this book. Her outsider status is something Traube turns to positive advantage. People less critically but more thoroughly immersed in film theory than Traube have not proved easily able to make the kind of sense she makes about such mind-numbing artifacts as *Rambo* ("rebarbarization—the regressive route to perfection") or Tom Cruise. *Dreaming Identities* is a major accomplishment.

PAUL THOMAS

■ Paul Thomas teaches at the University of California at Berkeley.

Film Theory Goes to the Movies

Cultural Analysis of Contemporary Film

Edited by Jim Collins, Hilary Radner, and Ava Preacher Collins. New York: Routledge/AFI Film Readers, 1993. $49.95 cloth; $15.95 paper.

This ambitious anthology examines popular American films of the 1980s and 1990s in light of ongoing issues in contemporary film theory. The work it sets out to accomplish is nothing less than an engagement between recent commercial film practice and methodologies of criticism that often seem, at first glance, to privilege the critic over the work itself.

The deceptions, hidden glyphic and iconic codes, as well as systems of social and ethnographic representationalism present in popular films are at once challenging and insidious. In his essay on "The New Hollywood," for example, Thomas Schatz discusses how *Jaws* heralded the dawn of the "new Hollywood," a universe where only mega-blockbusters could afford to survive in the marketplace, a marketplace fragmented into disparate audience reception zones (theatrical, video, cable) and multinational boundaries. Schatz's view of the social and commercial impact of *Jaws* is seen as a nexus of TV, video, and commercial exploitation, a process that valorizes both the film and its audience. Henry A. Giroux's essay on "Reclaiming the Social: Pedagogy, Resistance and Politics in Celluloid Culture" addresses the question of "resistance" by contemporary students to a rigorous interpretation of such popular films as *Dead Poets Society* and *Stand and Deliver*. Not surprisingly, Giroux discovers that while he viewed *Dead Poets Society* as a work that "ruptured and supported dominant codes regarding issues of knowledge, pedagogy and resistance," his students (initially, at least) failed to recognize the numerous ideological elisions and subsets of Weir's film. Hilary Radner deconstructs *Pretty Woman*, a film that was embraced by contemporary audiences and which has been seen in some circles as a quasi-feminist tract; Cathy Griggers and Sharon Willis offer persuasive (and differing) readings of Ridley Scott's *Thelma & Louise*, a seemingly feminist popular film that nevertheless conforms entirely to existing models of patriarchal discourse; and Susan White sees Disney's *The Little Mermaid* as a film with an unsettling message: to quote from the film, "you must suffer a bit to look pretty."

In "The Unauthorized Auteur Today," Dudley Andrew explores the new positioning of classical Bazinian auteurism in the current cinematic market, noting that "the global commercialization of culture . . . equalize[s] Spike Lee, Ridley Scott and Robert Bresson at the video rental store"; for the 1990s, the critical tool of auteur theory has become a system of commercial hierarchial exchange. Ava Preacher Collins deals with the formation of canon in popular and academic culture, while Jeffrey Sconce offers a compelling meditation on modern (and increasingly graphic) horror films, contrasting Hitchcock's now tame *Psycho* with the films of Wes Craven and Sean Cunningham. Janet Staiger tackles Jonathan Demme's *Silence of the Lambs*, and Ann Cvetkovich discusses Madonna's "documentary" *Truth or Dare* in context with the independent film *Paris Is Burning* (the latter as a film that documents the lives of the members of a marginalized subculture, the former as a "vanity project" that is simultaneously an advertisement and a carefully controlled presentation of Madonna's prepackaged image for public consumption).

Ed Guerrero discusses Spike Lee's African-American films within the changing context of racial representation in American films, arguing that Lee's vision is simply the latest evolution in a continual search for an appropriate African-American model that can be contained within the confines of commercial Hollywood discourse. Michael Eric Dyson's account of John Singleton's *Boyz N The Hood* documents the continual decimation of young African Americans in contemporary American society.

Susan Jeffords examines changing definitions of "Hollywood Masculinity in the 90s," charting the rise of a new group of male action stars such as Arnold Schwarzenegger and Steven Seagal, as compared to such alternative visions of cinematic masculinity as Albert Brooks and Billy Crystal. The issue of the body as a machine is explored by Forest Pyle in his essay on *The Terminator* and *Blade Runner*: he views these films as practical demonstrations of Bakhtin's theory of the "sealed knight," in which the masculine exostructure becomes an impenetrable shell of humanoid armor. Jim Collins shows how cinema genres adapt to the changing expectations of audiences that are often unaware of (or unimpressed with) the earlier models used by such recent films as *Batman Returns* and *Dances with Wolves*.

Film Theory Goes to the Movies is a book that is long overdue, and one that should be useful in any survey course of current American genre films. It displays a real love for the pleasures of genre, but also reserves the right to critique and examine the popular films we embrace.

WHEELER WINSTON DIXON

■ Wheeler Winston Dixon is Chairperson of the Film Studies Program of the University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

The Films of Alfred Hitchcock

By David Sterritt. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993. $39.95 cloth; $11.95 paper.

The Films of Woody Allen

By Sam B. Girgus. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993. $39.95 cloth; $11.95 paper.

Each of these books is part of the Cambridge Film Classics series (Raymond Carney, general editor), the stated purpose of which is to publish "revisionist studies of the classic works of the cinematic canon from the perspective of the 'new auteurism,'" and offer "cutting-edge reassessments of the canonical works of film study."

David Sterritt's approach to Hitchcock is eclectic and elliptical, so much so that it is difficult to know exactly what kind of book he is writing and who his imagined audience is. His methodology is sometimes broad and introductory (as in his summarizing explication of *Blackmail*), and other times specialized and technical (as in his treatment of psychoanalytic themes in *Psycho*). He makes no attempt to be comprehensive in his coverage, focusing on only six of Hitchcock's 53 films. His individual chapters are intended as separate critical studies, yet there are frequent links between the chapters as he returns repeatedly to a set of themes, techniques, and images that define for him Hitchcock's characteristic and peculiar greatness.

While he does not always clearly define his intentions and premises, tightly organize his findings, or specifically target his book, Sterritt does a fine job of tracing the hand of the master. There is little in the book that will surprise Hitchcock scholars, and Sterritt relies heavily (as we all must) on Tom Ryall's work on Hitchcock and the documentary tradition, Rohmer and Chabrol's analysis of the theme of guilt, Robin Wood's emphasis on the breakdown of the bourgeois family and the therapeutic function of the films, and William Rothman's focus on theatricality and reflexivity. But Sterritt's skills as a synthesizer of recent critical work and a perceptive viewer of and respondent to Hitchcock's films make his commentary consistently interesting, well informed, and informative. His introductory chapter in particular provides a lucid and useful overview of much of what we need to watch for in the films, including the tension between order and chaos, the unresolved endings, the ambiguous and complex "moral vision that runs through Hitchcock's works," (16) and Hitchcock's own ambivalent attempt to project and insert himself into as well as distance himself from his most thrilling and frightening fears. Sterritt is particularly attuned to these abstract and symbolic qualities of Hitchcock's work, but adds an important reminder of the "visceral impact" (17) and physicality of Hitchcock's world.

The individual chapters are tantalizingly brief. The discussion of *Blackmail* is for the most part a broadly descriptive summary, but Sterritt highlights theatricality and the theme of illusion vs. reality as the director's recurrent concerns. *Shadow of a Doubt* is covered in even fewer pages but more effectively, as Sterritt comments nicely on Hitchcock's characteristic blend of film-noir and horror-film (especially vampire) motifs and techniques, underscoring his "exploration and indictment of the increasingly chaotic nature of American life during this period." (59) Sterritt perhaps overstates the case when he calls *The Wrong Man* "in some respects the purest of Hitchcock's films," (24) but his analysis of its powerful presentation of not only individual guilt but also the broader weaknesses and disabilities of society and the family may help turn much-needed attention to this undervalued film.

The discussion of *Vertigo* begins with a stunning examination of the famous zoom in/track out shot as a visual equivalent of Hitchcock's attraction/repulsion or approach/avoidance dynamic, but the chapter continues with a somewhat superficial description of the theme of illusion vs. reality. The chapter on *Psycho* concentrates on its "preoccupation with anal-compulsive behavior," (100) and this is used as yet another way of exploring the varieties of performance and anxiety in Hitchcock's films. Finally, Sterritt concludes by linking *Psycho* and *The Birds* as explorations of uncontrollable irrationality, and convincingly argues that this latter often maligned film is one of Hitchcock's "radical," dark triumphs, particularly because of its "*refusal* to return us to normality" (121) and its "logophobia," its "ever-diminishing faith in spoken words." (138)

The Films of Alfred Hitchcock is not the consistently focused, innovative, and well-developed book on Hitchcock's theatricality that it sometimes aims to be. Nor is it as carefully planned and structured as one might hope. In a book pressed for space, for example, a 14-page filmography is unnecessary (this is a problem in Girgus's volume as well); these pages would have been much better used on an additional substantive chapter, such as one on *Marnie* that Sterritt seems ready to write in the all-too-brief epilogue. But there is something fascinating and important in every chapter.

Sam Girgus has to fight a battle that Sterritt does not. The question "Why should we take Hitchcock seriously?" is hardly asked anymore, but throughout his book Girgus

is nervously aware that "Why should we take Woody Allen seriously?" is still an open question. Although he constantly runs the risk of overstatement and overenthusiasm, Girgus convincingly and insightfully affirms the "ever-deepening moral complexity" of Allen's films (x) and illustrates how in works of tragicomic brilliance he "challenges most of our traditional notions of authorship, narrative, perspective, character development, theme, ideology, gender construction, and sexuality." (1)

Four key critical claims run through the individual chapters and provide the basis for Girgus's analysis and praise. (I take them up in no particular order of importance.) First, Girgus stresses Allen's remarkable visual as well as verbal powers of imagination. It is easy to be captivated by the dialogue in the films almost to the exclusion of all else, but Girgus's chapter on *Manhattan* in particular shows how the cinematography underscores the themes of distortion and deception that are endlessly discussed. Some of Girgus's most interesting comments throughout the book focus on Allen's cinematic imagination in not only *Manhattan* but also *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, *Hannah and Her Sisters*, and *Crimes and Misdemeanors*.

Second, Girgus defends Allen from the charge that he is merely trivial and personal by emphasizing the thematic variety and profundity of his work. Many critics and viewers see in the films only a repeated autobiographical tale of a schlemiel from another planet: middle-class Jewish Brooklyn of the 1940s. Girgus, though, sees Allen's films as working out a "stuttering poetics of insecurity" (35) that dramatizes social and cultural as well as personal problems of desire (e.g., *Annie Hall*), guilt and Jewishness (*Crimes and Misdemeanors*), sexual relations (*Hannah and Her Sisters*), and anxiety (*The Purple Rose of Cairo*). One of his most contentious arguments is that Allen's maturity as a film-maker is signaled by his turn toward "an ultimate goal" of "making great films about women," (42) a goal which Girgus feels he reaches in *Hannah*. Whether or not we agree with this judgment, Girgus argues persuasively that Allen's recent films are remarkable cinematic meditations on important current problems. (This book was written before the more recent publicity about Allen's personal life, publicity that, for better or worse, will undoubtedly affect all further judgments about the critical value of his films.)

Third, Girgus takes what might be described as an "American Studies" approach to Allen, and places him in the context of classical and modern American artists and enduring and characteristic American concerns. This is a worthy project, but he attends to it so fleetingly that it can hardly be anything more than provocative: scattered references to Mark Twain, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Philip Roth, and E. L. Doctorow don't add up to much, and a brief discussion of *Play It Again, Sam* and *Casablanca* doesn't go very far in assessing Allen's fascinating relationship to American cinema. Girgus's bold, Emersonian statements—such as the claim that for Allen, cinema is a "potent force for personal renewal and cultural regeneration, including a potential revivification of American perspectives and values" (10)—are intriguing but insufficiently explored.

Finally, and least successfully in my opinion, Girgus repeatedly highlights what he takes to be the postmodern qualities of Allen's films, and most of the chapters—e.g., "Desire and Narrativity in *Annie Hall*"; "*The Purple Rose of Cairo*: Poststructural Anxiety Comes to New Jersey"—revolve around theoretical concepts developed by Lacan, Barthes, Kristeva, de Lauretis, et al. While Girgus shows that some of Allen's films submit to postmodern approaches (what, alas, does not?), these sections of the book are relatively (though not completely) obtuse, and lead him to two key methodological problems, if not contradictions: an emphasis on postmodern psychology clashes with Girgus's frequent use of Freud as one of the cornerstones of Allen's work; and the strenuous attempt to fashion Allen as a radical postmodern doesn't acknowledge the extent to which Allen fashions himself as a modern (and a "conservative" modern at that). This is a distinction with a real difference.

Despite occasional uncritical cheering and hypercritical postmodern theorizing, though, Girgus accomplishes what he sets out to do: he confirms that Woody Allen is one of the great American directors, whose works reconsider the American hero and the American dream, (128) seriously engage with crucial ethical and existential problems, (9) and, last but not least, remind us of the analytic and therapeutic as well as entertaining power of comedy.

SIDNEY GOTTLIEB

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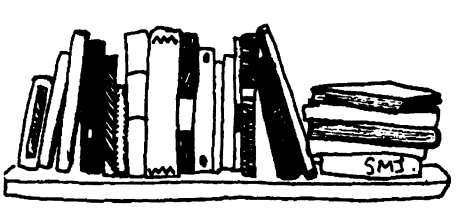

Grand Design

Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise, 1930–1939

Volume 5 of Scribners' *History of the American Cinema*

Edited by Tino Balio. New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1993. $65.00.

There's a nice, intriguing polysemy to the title of the fifth volume in Scribners' splendid multi-volume *History of the American Cinema*. On the one hand, the title might lead us to think of the look and feel of the Hollywood films of the period—of, for instance, those shimmering, stylish Deco opuses in which grandeur of visual *design* seems, precisely, to be the point.

On the other hand, design has also to do, as the first pages of the book make clear, with the setting out of a carefully calculated planning—Hollywood here as an industry geared rigorously to making vast profits from the entertainment-dollars of the American (and world) publics. The "design," then, is that of the economic process referred to in the book's subtitle: Hollywood as above all a business enterprise, with questions of style and art secondary perhaps to tactics of marketing (so secondary that one of the book's contributors, Richard Maltby, can refer to the operations of Hollywood film production as having to do with "manufacturers" and "retailers," the films then turning out to be little more than saleable commodities, rather than works of art).

But in this respect, it is necessary to note that *Grand Design* refuses emphatically to identify "Design" with "Intention," or at least with the intention of particular central agents within the business of film. The tale *Grand Design* narrates is of an industry forged out of numerous interests and economic designs, many of which were often in conflict around this or that specific and local issue (for example, various battles between owners and management). Yet for all this emphasis on conflict, *Grand Design* is not primarily a study in contradiction as the necessary motor of history. Eschewing the tendency in recent cultural studies to elevate the slightest sign of incompatibilities among interests within a cultural system to a veritable political breakdown or subversion of that system, *Grand Design* describes the operations of Hollywood big business as, by nature, processes of modification, adjudication, compromise, negotiation, and revision, all of which serve to get the industry of film going.

In light of this understanding of the operation of Hollywood capitalism as a site of multiple interests and designs which nonetheless work together to give American cinema its design, it is revealing that *Grand Design* is the first of the Scribners volumes to have multiple authors. It is as if only a dispersed writing could capture the multifaceted nature of an overdetermined industry. Editor Tino Balio (who also contributes almost half the text) has assembled a major set of writers to approach American film in the 1930s from a productive diversity of angles: Maltby on censorship and self-regulation; David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson on the relations between technological change and filmic style; Brian Taves on the B-movie; Charles Wolfe on documentary; Jan-Chistopher Horak on avant-garde film. Balio's sections range from the economics of production and exhibition to the selling of stars and to the role of various genres within the effective functioning of the Hollywood system.

Insofar as many of the chapters deal with overlapping concerns, there is a kind of cubist construction of many of the arguments in *Grand Design*: topics are approached by recurrent angles and rendered solid through repetition. Just as the book's subject is the condensation of myriad forces into the emphatic singularity of an efficacious industry, so too is the book's intellectual design that of a centering of myriad themes into a forceful overall argument about Hollywood's role in the centering of cinema. There is, for example, a stylist centering (discussed in the Bordwell-Thompson chapter) of the image onto the human figure through the regularization of techniques such as lighting, framing, camera movement, and the shoring up of these techniques by advances in technology (for example, the development of rear-screen projection in the 1930s aids in the separating off of human figures from a less rich background). Beyond the centering at the level of the image, there is also a narrative centering (discussed by Balio in his chapters) around the aura of the star and the playing out of the star's appeal in gripping and generically defined imaginative projections. And there is moreover the centering of style and story alike by an industry working desperately to make its markets and its means of production predictable and rational. The history of 1930s cinema as it is told here is so much the history of a centered concretion and concretization of popular artistry and economic power together that even the chapters on seemingly alternate cinemas—documentaries, B-movies, avant-garde films—concentrate to a large degree on the ways in which such cinemas inevitably had to come up against Hollywood (whether as foe, as goal, or as something that for better or for worse would coopt them).

Like earlier volumes in the Scribners series, the centering of *Grand Design* on a singular and emphatic history makes of the volume a work that is both important as a reference tool and quite readable as an eloquent account in its own right. As with the other volumes, the writers here have rendered their research rigorous and riveting through a persistent design to work in archives

and with primary texts: the bibliographies and extensive footnotes would almost alone be worth the price of admission, and these research tools are usefully supplemented by appendices that indicate the top-grossers, the Academy Award winners, and annual Ten Best Films from *Film Daily*.

Unlike the earlier volumes, though, *Grand Design* seems less concerned to *narrate* its period—to picture consequential change over time—than to set out spatially the regularities of a generally unchanging system. Some of this spatiality might come from the employment of several writers to make up the book, a choice that leads productively to recurrent motifs and overlapping approaches. But it seems also that the de-emphasis on temporality is in keeping with the book's design to concentrate on an achieved, solidified, centered system able so often to absorb threatening changes.

At the same time—and the paradox is only apparent—this volume seems to give much more attention than its predecessors to extra-filmic history. We learn, for example, about politics and economics in the Depression, and these form an inevitable influential backdrop to Hollywood happenings. Even though Balio declares at one point that it is "misguided to condemn Hollywood for ignoring the economic and social upheavals created by the Depression and for concentrating instead on escapist fare for its survival," (281) much of *Grand Design* (including a great part of Balio's own analysis) is quite attuned to the resonances that political and social and economic shifts have for both the art and industry of Hollywood. With this volume, Scribners, Balio, and series editor Charles Harpole have once again come up with a work of major importance for the serious study of American film.

DANA POLAN

■ Dana Polan teaches
at the University of Pittsburgh.

The Magnificent Ambersons

A Reconstruction

By Robert L. Carringer. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993. $30.00.

Throughout the history of American film, a number of film directors—from Erich von Stroheim to Robert Altman—are remembered as maverick artists destroyed by the crass economic imperatives of money-grubbing moguls. Of all these mavericks, Orson Welles probably ranks as the most famous and studied. And with the possible exception of von Stroheim's *Greed*, *The Magnificent Ambersons*, Welles' 1942 adaptation of the Booth Tarkington novel, has developed a reputation as the most egregious example of how Hollywood destroys art when it conflicts with the imperatives of the box office. Welles scholars have long noted that after one disastrous preview and another unsatisfactory one, Welles' 131-minute version of the film was taken from his hands, recut, and eventually released in an 88-minute version. And no one has been able to recover the discarded footage, leaving intact the myth of the headstrong maverick versus the philistine mogul.

The myth is a compelling one, because it pits the solitary artist against a callous and materialistic system—long an appealing perspective in a culture as devoted to individualism as the United States. Much recent film history, however, has shown us that the reality is considerably more complicated than the myth.

One important practitioner of this recent film history is Robert Carringer, whose 1985 book, *The Making of Citizen Kane*, drew convincingly on a broad range of interviews, studio records, and other primary sources to trace the production history of that most famous of Hollywood movies and to emphasize the collaborative nature of its achievement. That book struck an impressive balance between emphasizing the contributions of such professionals as designer Perry Ferguson, cinematographer Gregg Toland, screenwriter Herman L. Manckiewicz, and composer Bernard Herrmann, and acknowledging Welles' indispensable role as the film's key creative catalyst.

In his new book, *The Magnificent Ambersons: A Reconstruction*, Carringer not only returns to Welles' career but also focuses his attention on the questions of just what happened to *The Magnificent Ambersons* and what it would have been like had it not been tampered with. The centerpiece of the book is a textual edition of *The Magnificent Ambersons*, using the March 12, 1942, cutting continuity of the film (its first preview was March 17), which Carringer believes is Welles' "preferred master plan" (35) for the film. Working from the continuity, Carringer indicates what was cut from the original version in the release print, what scenes were reordered, and what new footage was shot and integrated into the film.

But the book contains considerably more than the cutting continuity and its differences from the final release print. Besides a brief introduction, a detailed cast list, and a bibliography, the book contains five major sections. The first, Carringer's essay "Oedipus in Indianapolis," discusses Welles, some reasons that he was attracted to the source novel, and his role in making the

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film. It is followed by "A Note on Textual Practice," in which Carringer defines terms, describes the textual principles he followed in carrying out the reconstruction, and states the aim of the project: "to enable the reader to gain as clear an impression of the original film as is possible from the materials that survive," (35) an aim he admirably succeeds in fulfilling. The third section is a chronology of the Amberson family reconstructed from Welles' shooting script, the only source that gives precise dates for the events depicted in the film. The cutting continuity constitutes the fourth and longest section: it runs over 230 of the book's 307 pages. Finally, Carringer includes a meticulous documentary history of the editing and reediting of *Ambersons*, drawing on the surprisingly large number of extant communications between Welles and RKO during the editing stage. Combined, these sections of the book give us as thorough an account of the film's reediting and as accurate a picture of what the original film was like as we are ever likely to get.

Besides this thorough reconstruction, the book throws a monkey wrench into the legend that *The Magnificent Ambersons* was Welles' masterpiece, a well-oiled machine destroyed by the studio. First, Carringer tells us that RKO burned the negative trims and outtakes because of a shortage of storage space. That the outtakes of Hitchcock's *Suspicion* were destroyed at the same time makes it hard to believe that Welles was the recipient of studio vindictiveness.

Furthermore, Carringer believes that Welles himself "must bear the ultimate responsibility for the film's undoing." (3) In his fascinating discussion of Welles and the film, Carringer argues that Welles had a much darker and more insecure childhood than he ever admitted in interviews (or than most biographers have depicted), and that because of parallels between his own relationship with his mother and George's with Isabel, Welles found the shooting of the film trying. Not only did he refuse to play George Amberson himself, casting the less able Tim Holt, but he also became "increasingly moody and irritable" during the shooting because of the personally vexing materials he was handling. Then, immediately after the shooting ended, Welles left for South America and his next project. It's clear that such an extensive trip during World War II weakened whatever leverage he had to defend his film. As Carringer sums up, during the making of *Ambersons*, Welles "was divided against himself: engaged on one side of his nature in the creating of . . . one of the most visually brilliant films ever made in Hollywood . . . but on another side almost at the mercy of an elemental disquietude that impaired his artistic responsibility and detachment." (29)

The one disappointment I'm left with after reading the book is that we don't have a print of the original preview film: reading a description of one of Stanley Cortez's long-take moving-camera shots fails to match the experience of watching it. Despite Carringer's thorough research, his success at making the cutting continuity readable, and the inclusion of photographs, storyboard sketches, and other visual material to support the text, it's hard not to yearn for a miraculous restoration of the burned footage. Although he makes a convincing case that *no* version of this film would be Welles' masterpiece, Carringer's admirable efforts may, paradoxically, lead even more film scholars and enthusiasts to lament the loss of that original preview version of *The Magnificent Ambersons*.

That version is unlikely ever to surface, however, and Robert Carringer has done as much as is humanly possible to clear up myths and to correct misconceptions about Welles' flawed second film. Simultaneously, his book provides a model for preparing a textual edition of an important film which has existed in variable forms. For both reasons, *The Magnificent Ambersons: A Reconstruction* constitutes an important contribution to film history.

CHUCK MALAND

■ Chuck Maland teaches at the University of Tennessee.

The Mega Movie Guide for Windows

Orem, UT: InfoBusiness. $59.95.

Magill's Survey of the Cinema

Peabody, MA: EBSCO Publishing. $99.

The computer industry has recently fired another salvo in the information revolution—affordable CD-ROM drives. Costing about $300, these devices attach to Macintosh and IBM PCs and can run computer discs with vast reservoirs of data. For example, home users can access the equivalent of half a million single-spaced typed pages of text on one disc. This means multi-volume encyclopedias, dictionaries, and other reference works (some with sound and video) fit on single discs.

Two CD-ROM reference works—*The Mega Movie Guide for Windows* and *Magill's Survey of the Cinema* (for MS-DOS)—have just been released, and promise to change the way you pursue and organize film information. Not only do they contain vast amounts of information about many films, they allow you to access it faster

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CHUCK MALAND

■ Chuck Maland teaches at the University of Tennessee.

The Mega Movie Guide for Windows

Orem, UT: InfoBusiness. $59.95.

Magill's Survey of the Cinema

Peabody, MA: EBSCO Publishing. $99.

The computer industry has recently fired another salvo in the information revolution—affordable CD-ROM drives. Costing about $300, these devices attach to Macintosh and IBM PCs and can run computer discs with vast reservoirs of data. For example, home users can access the equivalent of half a million single-spaced typed pages of text on one disc. This means multi-volume encyclopedias, dictionaries, and other reference works (some with sound and video) fit on single discs.

Two CD-ROM reference works—*The Mega Movie Guide for Windows* and *Magill's Survey of the Cinema* (for MS-DOS)—have just been released, and promise to change the way you pursue and organize film information. Not only do they contain vast amounts of information about many films, they allow you to access it faster

than traditional methods, even making the process entertaining as well. Do these products live up to their claims? How easy are they to use? How useful is the information they retrieve? Will CD-ROMs burst into homes, home office, and libraries and sweep aside Leonard Maltin's *Movies on TV and Videocassette* and *The International Dictionary of Films and Filmmakers*?

Perhaps. *The Mega Movie Guide* is an ambitious piece of software. It contains reviews of almost 60,000 films of all types—domestic, foreign, independent, made-for-TV, even X-rated features. You can locate films by searching on parameters like director's name, title, MPAA rating, actors, and so forth, For example, if you specify "Jean Harlow," the program displays brief reviews of all films Jean Harlow appeared in, including compilations like *MGM's Big Parade of Comedy* (1964). Each review also contains hypertext links, specially coded words that, when selected, bring up additional information. Click on "Clark Gable," listed in the Jean Harlow film *Red Dust*, and you retrieve every film that he appears in. All of the main actors are listed (but not the characters they portrayed), as is other useful information, such as whether a film is available on video.

What about the quality of the reviews? Most of them are mere one-sentence summaries, such as this one for *Red Dust*: "The overseer of an Indochinese plantation creates havoc when he falls in love with the wife of a young engineer." Five thousand of them offer some critical analysis, but are confined to the paragraph-long, star-rating style similar to that found in popular film/video guides. But although their criticism is brief and aimed at a popular audience, it is seldom shoddy. The publisher could have included more extensive reviews, but instead chose to fill up the disc with two hours of space-consuming film clips. Seeing a three-inch square clip of the opening scene of *Night of the Living Dead*, complete with sound, is not an aesthetic experience (the clip is grainy and choppy), but it can be an amusing memory jog. Also, there is a substantial library of film stills, in case you forget what William S. Hart looked like. Like directors of early Marx Brothers' films who worked in unnecessary musical numbers, the publisher must have felt that reviews alone would not sell the product. There are other minor problems, such as spelling variations. For example, the index lists four spellings for Marcello Mastroianni's name and two for Martin Scorsese, each of which retrieves different films.

I was unable to test *Magill's* as extensively as *The Mega Movie Guide*. I experienced problems with its installation and operation, due to either bugs in the software or incompatibilities with my slow CD-ROM drive. However, what I did see was most impressive. This product contains Magill's multi-volume reference series first published in the early 1980s. It contains 15,000 reviews (5,000 of which are extensive critical articles). As with *The Mega Movie Guide*, you can combine search criteria, making it possible, for instance, to locate every Marcello Mastroianni film available on video. The full reviews, comprising both plot summary and evaluation, are helpful to the film scholar searching for character delineation, social context, and political analysis. However, with such a small number of films reviewed, there are bound to be exclusions. A search on Pontecorvo lists only one film, *The Battle of Algiers*, while *The Mega Movie Guide* lists four.

As first releases, both products are impressive compendiums of easily retrievable information. However, both could benefit from design improvements, such as more space devoted to reviews. (*Magill's* uses only one-fifth of its disc space.) The online help screens and documentation could also be better tailored for the inexperienced computer user. I have little doubt that some day CD-ROM products like these will eliminate most print-based research media—but not yet.

PETER BATES

■ Peter Bates writes about film, photography, and computer technology and is currently working on a young-adult techno-thriller.

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debate on the cinematic apparatus to include considerations of the gay viewer and other implications of gay cultural politics. His approach to these topics is a unique blend of semiotics, Marxism, and a feminist-inflected gay sensibility.

The essays chosen for this collection all deal, in one way or another, with a theory of entertainment and a detailed consideration of a specific entertainment form (principally films and popular music). They all question how entertainment signifies *and* how entertainment functions as entertainment. *Only Entertainment*'s first half is dominated by analyses, notably "Entertainment and Utopia" and "Four Films of Lana Turner." The former is Dyer's most semiotic-oriented discussion, articulating aspects of the musical's signification of utopia through representational and nonrepresentational signs. The latter is a key example of how the principles laid out in Dyer's short but influential book, *Stars*, may be applied to a specific case. The "media texts" (promotion, publicity, film roles, and criticism of those roles) that constructed Turner's star image, her star text, are dissected here, in a model presentation of the deconstruction of the star's image.

A short commentary on the sexual politics of Rudolph Valentino as spectatorial object segues the book into five chapters on aspects of gay cultural production. Throughout these essays, Marxist and semiotic perspectives continue to influence Dyer's work. He approaches gay culture as an aspect of the social formation, and he does so by breaking down the signifiers, the imagery, of sexuality (both hetero and homo) within that formation. He is concerned with the *signs* of sexual power within patriarchy and how those signs may be understood and challenged. Central to Dyer's project is the importance of lived experience to the comprehension of gender politics. For him, " . . . political struggle is rooted in experience (though utterly doomed if left at it). . . ." (156) Most of the essays of *Only Entertainment* reflect this orientation. They mingle the political with the personal in intriguing, significant ways.

JEREMY G. BUTLER

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For film historians, probably the greatest interest of this book is not its penchant for psychologizing but its account of the production and, especially, the exhibition and promotion of successful feature-length "travel" films like *Jungle Adventures* (1921), which Samuel "Roxy" Rothafel premiered with much flair at the Capitol theater in New York City, and *Across the World with Mr. and Mrs. Martin Johnson* (1930), which relied on product placement and endorsement (for Willys trucks and Maxwell House coffee). Yet motion pictures were only one commercial outlet for the Johnsons. They also re-presented and marketed their "real-life adventures" in the South Seas and Africa as magazine articles, books, photographs, and lectures—all designed to keep "Mr. and Mrs. Martin Johnson" before the public and to validate their position as "the principal interpreters of Africa to the American public."

Inevitably, *They Married Adventure* becomes, in turn, another version of Martin and Osa Johnson, one that is sympathetic and yet cannot ignore the overt racism of films like *Simba* (1928). The Imperatos account for this racism by concluding that the Johnsons were "products" of their society—a valid claim, as far as it goes. The precise textual articulation of this racism in the Johnsons' "Africa" merits a more thorough analysis, especially since some of their photographs and motion pictures "have since become extremely valuable ethnographic documents." (81) The paradox here is striking, connected in ways that the Imperatos do not acknowledge to current discourse on documentary ethics and the representation of the Other.

GREGORY A. WALLER

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GREGG RICKMAN

McCann, Graham. *Rebel Males*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1993. $40.00 cloth; $14.95 paper. Clift, Brando, and Dean have been analyzed, anatomized and annotated to death in numerous books. *Rebel Males*, which targets the Big Three—"without

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doubt the three most influential (and probably most gifted) male movie stars of the 1950s"—could only have been written on a dare, or sabbatical. Graham McCann, a college lecturer from Great Britain, takes these three overly familiar Hollywood anti-heroes, and compares/contrasts their overlapping life stories, acting styles, cultural influence. Some of his academic bluster is misinformed, perhaps by British remove (William Inge's *Picnic* is mentioned in passing as "one of the first plays to highlight the Midwest"). And the final chapter, "The Legacy" of today's rebel males, with Mickey Rourke given equal time with Robert De Niro and Al Pacino, is a hoot. However, McCann's book is saved by its refreshing sense of humor, and the author's willingness to draw from all variety of sources (including titillating gossip). McCann synopsizes and summarizes well, and his writing style has a velocity that makes the *Rebel Males* go by fast—like a wild one on a motorcycle.

PATRICK MCGILLIGAN

Schelde, Per. *Androids, Humanoids, and Other Science Fiction Monsters*. New York: New York University Press, 1993. $35.00. Per Schelde's book recapitulates the plots of several mostly well-known films as it traces the move of his unwieldly title characters from "monster" to "more human than human." Donna Haraway is not mentioned, but Nordic folklore is in a pleasant, chatty, minor work.

G. R.

Sloan, Jane E. *Alfred Hitchcock: A Guide to References and Resources*. New York: G. K. Hall, 1993. $65.00. Long anticipated, *Alfred Hitchcock: A Guide to References and Resources* opens with a brief biography and an informed critical survey of the director, and closes with two indexes to the main sections of the book, the synopses, and the bibliography. The synopses of the 57 films (including *Bon Voyage* and *Aventure Malgache*) are detailed and very useful, and the annotated bibliography includes books and articles, arranged chronologically from 1919 through 1990, and supplemented (for many books) with a selected bibliography of reviews. The appendices contain contemporaneous reviews of the films and lists of miscellaneous materials; additional film credits (including television episodes Hitchcock directed); and an overview of archival collections pertinent to Hitchcock. In short, this book will be prized by scholars and students.

Now the caveats. The preface notes that the bibliography "includes citations for most of the substantial critical commentary. . . ." The editor does not define "most," however, and certain omissions are curious. For instance, the Guide includes Louis Phillips' "Armchair Detective" essays on *Vertigo*, *The Trouble with Harry*, and *North by Northwest*, but not *Rear Window*. It includes William S. Pechter's essay on *Psycho* in *Twenty-Four Times a Second*, but not V. F. Perkins' commentary on *Psycho* in *Film as Film*. Where it counts, however—in its annotated bibliography—*Alfred Hitchcock: A Guide to References and Resources* is indispensable.

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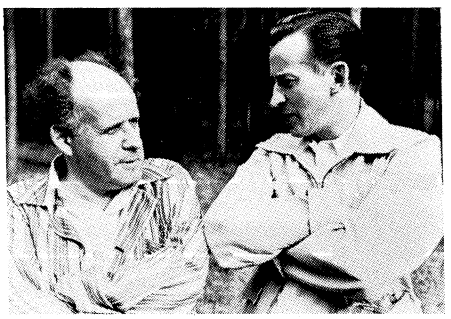

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